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letter from the editor

At least two things are sure to come to Nebraska every March: snow and the state high school basketball tournaments.

One is a phenomenon that no human being can control, an occurrence that makes driving hazardous and sidetracks people's schedules for entire days.

The other is frozen precipitation.

Just kidding. Well . . . yeah, I guess.

The state tournaments have been a mainstay of Nebraska high school sports for years, beginning on the first two Thursdays of March and ending on the first two Saturdays. Thousands of parents, students, fans, administrators, townsfolk, sports writers and curious onlookers flock to Lincoln during these annual events, and are rarely, if ever, forgotten by anyone who has made the trip to the Bob Devaney Sports Center, Pershing Auditorium or any other sites around town where the games are played.

Every year, the teams, players and coaches are as different as the colors they wear and the records they bring.

But there are a few things that stay the same.

The sounds and smells of the arenas have transcended time, as have the fans, whose loyalty to prep basketball and clever insights into the game serve as the cornerstone for the tournaments' success.

Songs like "Eye of the Tiger" and "The Theme from Hawaii 5-0" are constants of the school pep bands in attendance. In fact, I think there's now a rule that bands cannot play at the Sports Center unless at least one of those songs is in their repertoire.

Likewise, fans are not allowed into games unless they are prepared to question every call by every official on the court, unless it happens to go in favor of their favorite team.

And whenever fans on one side of the arena begin chanting the ever-popular, sing-song "Airball! Airball!" after a nervous player's shot misses the entire backboard and rim, the other side is, according to Congressional mandate, required to return fire with "Scoreboard! Scoreboard!"

Memo to fans: Do this only if your team happens to be leading at the time. It loses its thunder somewhat if you're down by 10 points.

The wins and losses, the sights and sounds, the tastes and smells, the fans, coaches and players. All the ingredients add up to a lot of fun for the state's sports fans every spring.

Heck, it's even fun when it snows. I guess.

Chuck Green

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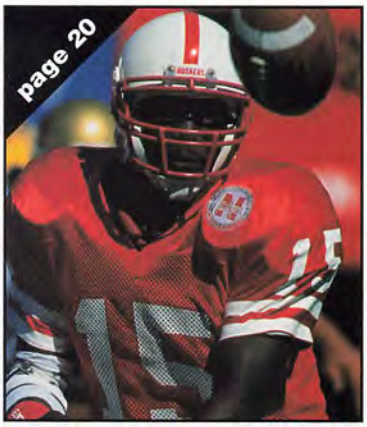

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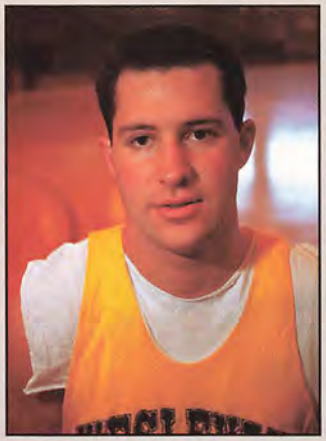
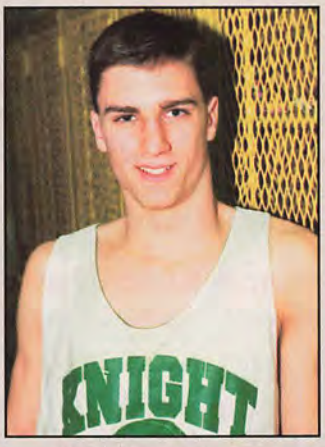
Tony Hildebrand, a junior at Louisville High School, scored a career-high 31 points and pulled down 21 rebounds in the Lions' 67-61 win over Bennington Feb. 11. Hildebrand scored 19 points in the second half.



Jay Spearman, a senior forward on the Nebraska Wesleyan men's basketball team, scored 28 points against York College Feb. 13 to surpass the 2,000-point mark for his career. Spearman is only the second Plainsmen to accomplish the feat. Spearman also scored 33 points to lead Wesleyan to a 94-74 over previously unbeaten St. Thomas (Minn.) in the second round of the NCAA Division III men's basketball playoffs. He hit 7 of 8 shots in the first half and scored 11 of Wesleyan's first 17 points.



Chris Paulson, a senior guard on the Fremont Bergen boys' basketball team, scored a school-record 41 points in a 103-90 win over Omaha Central Christian Feb. 7. Paulson also helped the Knights shatter the school record for most points scored in a single game.

Shana Randof became the first female junior bowler in state history to roll a perfect 300 game Feb. 13. Randof, a senior at Bellevue West High School, rolled her 300 in the second game of the two-game league format of the Metro Sports Foundation High School Bowling League at Omaha's Leisure Lanes.

Honorable Mention

Nebraska Wesleyan's **Adam Decker**, **Brandon Schroer** and **Bren Chambers** took first, second and third place, respectively, in the 60-yard high hurdles at the Nebraska Wesleyan Relays Jan. 21. Decker won with a time of 7.77 seconds. Schroer, who ran his first high hurdles race since suffering a hamstring injury in 1992, finished second with a time of 7.91. Chambers time was 8.06.

Nebraska Wesleyan high jumper **Scott Klein** met the NCAA Division III provisional qualifying standard at the Wesleyan Relays, improving his indoor career best with a leap of 6 feet, 9 3/4 inches. His previous career-best clearance was 6-8 in 1993.

Becky Flynn, a junior forward on the Creighton Lady Jays basketball team, was named to the GTE/CoSIDA Academic All-District VII Team, which covers colleges and universities from Nebraska, Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Montana, North and South Dakota, and Wyoming. Flynn carries a 3.96 grade-point average with majors in journalism and psychology. She led the Lady Jays in scoring, rebounding and steals this season.

Nebraska's **Paulette Mitchell** automatically qualified for the NCAA Indoor Track and Field Championships in the shot put with a throw of 52 feet, 9 1/2 inches in a Feb. 4 meet at Illinois.

Jeff Bro, a member of the Nebraska men's swimming and diving team, scored a 318 on the 3-meter springboard Feb. 4 against Kansas to win the gold medal and qualify for the NCAA championship meet. The dual was the last at the Bob Devaney Sports Center for Bro, a senior.

Kim DeHaan, a sophomore gymnast at Nebraska, scored a career-best 9.80 on the vault to help her win the all-around competition against Oklahoma Feb. 4. She scored a career-best 9.875 in the floor exercise against Iowa State in the next meet. DeHaan, who was named the Big Eight Newcomer of the Year in women's gymnastics last year, set a Husker women's record with a 39.275 in the all-around against Iowa State Feb. 16. DeHaan was named the Big Eight Women's Gymnast of the Month for February.

Richard Grace, a senior Husker gymnast, won four events and finished first in the all-around competition against Oklahoma Feb. 4. Grace, a 1991 graduate of Millard South High School, is trying to become the next Nebraska gymnast to make the U.S. Olympic team.

Korey Lowe, a senior on the Grant High School boys basketball team, sank a school-record eight three-point shots against Garden County on his way to a 31-point night and a 107-45 win.

Mike Fitzner, a sophomore on Wayne State's basketball team, hit nine three-

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point shots — a school record — against Southwest Minnesota State Feb. 11.

Bellevue East's **Buddy Carlyle** scored 47 points in two games the weekend of Feb. 4. Carlyle, a junior forward for the Chieftains, shot 15 of 20 from the field, including 7 of 9 three-point shots in wins over Omaha Gross and Omaha Northwest.

Donnie Johnson, a 6-foot-7 forward at Omaha Central, scored 51 points in two games during the weekend of Feb. 4. He blocked 10 shots in those games.

Omaha Racers forward **Alex Blackwell** scored a career-high 37 points in the Racers' 110-105 loss to the Mexico Aztecas Feb. 7. Blackwell shot 12 of 20 from the field and hit 13 of 15 free throws.

Ross Paule and **Johnny Torres**, Creighton soccer players, were named to Soccer America magazine's Freshman All-America Team, consisting of the top 11 freshman players in the country in 1994.

Paule, a midfielder from Cordova, Tenn., scored six goals and five assists while starting all 21 Bluejays games last season. He was named the Missouri Valley Conference Freshman Newcomer of the Year.

Torres, a forward from Dickenson, Texas, ranked second on the team in scoring with 20 points and led the Bluejays in assists with eight. He also was a second-team all-conference selection and was named to the conference all-tournament team.

Nebraska pitcher **Alvie Shepherd**, a right-handed junior from Hillside, Ill., was listed as the country's 21st-best collegiate prospect by Baseball America magazine. Teammate **Todd Sears**, a first baseman from Ankeny, Iowa, was listed as the Big Eight's top incoming freshman player by the same publication.

Arlington senior **J.P. Rhea** scored 37 points to lead his team to a 92-83 upset of then-Class C-1 No. 4-ranked Ashland-Greenwood Feb. 9. Rhea has averaged more than 15 points per game for most of the season.

Kim Osler, a senior sprinter on the University of Nebraska at Omaha women's track and field team, ran the 55-meter hurdles in 8.06 seconds at the Tiger Invitational at Doane College Feb. 4. Osler's time tied her school record, set a meet record and ranked first nationally.

Omaha Burke's **Alvin Mitchell** and **Eddie Lund** combined for 47 points in a 74-60 win over Omaha Benson Feb. 11.

Nate Kincannon, a senior guard on the Midland Lutheran men's basketball team, poured in 51 points in a 119-116 triple-overtime loss to Doane Feb. 8. Kincannon set school records for points scored and field goals made in a game with 17.

With his 19 points and 10 assists against Nebraska City Feb. 14, Omaha Roncalli's **Ryan Woodard** became that school's career leader in points with 1,363 and in rebounds with 793.

Jeff Boies, a member of the Arlington High School basketball team, came off the bench to score 32 points, including a state-record 10 three-point shots, to help Arlington beat Fort Calhoun 81-63 in a Class C1-4 subdistrict game Feb. 20.

Todd Magnuson, a member of the University of Nebraska-Kearney men's track and field team, set a school record in the 1,000-meter run with a time of 2:30.16. The mark came Feb. 17 at the Nebraska-Iowa Athletic Conference Invitational at Nebraska Wesleyan in Lincoln.

Shandra Johnson, a sophomore at Omaha North High School, broke her own state record in the 500-yard freestyle by finishing in 4 minutes, 59.13 seconds. She also won the 200 freestyle in a state-record time of 1 minute, 50.77 seconds, earning her automatic high school All-America status. Her marks came at the state swimming and diving meet at the Bob Devaney Sports Center Feb. 24.

Coley Stickles, a junior at Creighton Prep, earned an automatic high school All-America time of 45.76 seconds in the 100-yard freestyle during the state swimming and diving meet in Lincoln Feb. 24. He also broke the state record in the 50 freestyle with a time of 20.66.

Ben Reis, a junior point guard for Norfolk, scored 34 points — including 16 in the fourth quarter — in the Panthers' 62-53 win over Lincoln East in the Class A-2 District semifinals Feb. 27.

Tracy Blake finished with 33 points, hitting all 10 of his attempts from the free-throw line, in leading Boys Town to a 84-66 win over Elkhorn in the District B-4 championship game.

Matt Johnson, a 6-7 center for Ashland-Greenwood and a seemingly regular member of The Lineup, scored 47 points in the Bluejays' 92-67 District C1-2 championship win over Arlington.

Wahoo's **Mike Simmons** scored 32 points to lead the undefeated Warriors to a 82-42 rout of David City in the District C-1 final.

Molly Mullin, a junior member of the Nebraska women's golf team, was named the February Big Eight Women's Golfer of the Month. Mullin, who is from Scottsbluff, shot a career-low 232 at the UCLA Pioneer Electric Bruin Classic and tied for 19th at the River Wilderness Intercollegiate Tournament in Sarasota, Florida. She was able to post a 78.20 stroke average and four consecutive sub-80 rounds. NSM

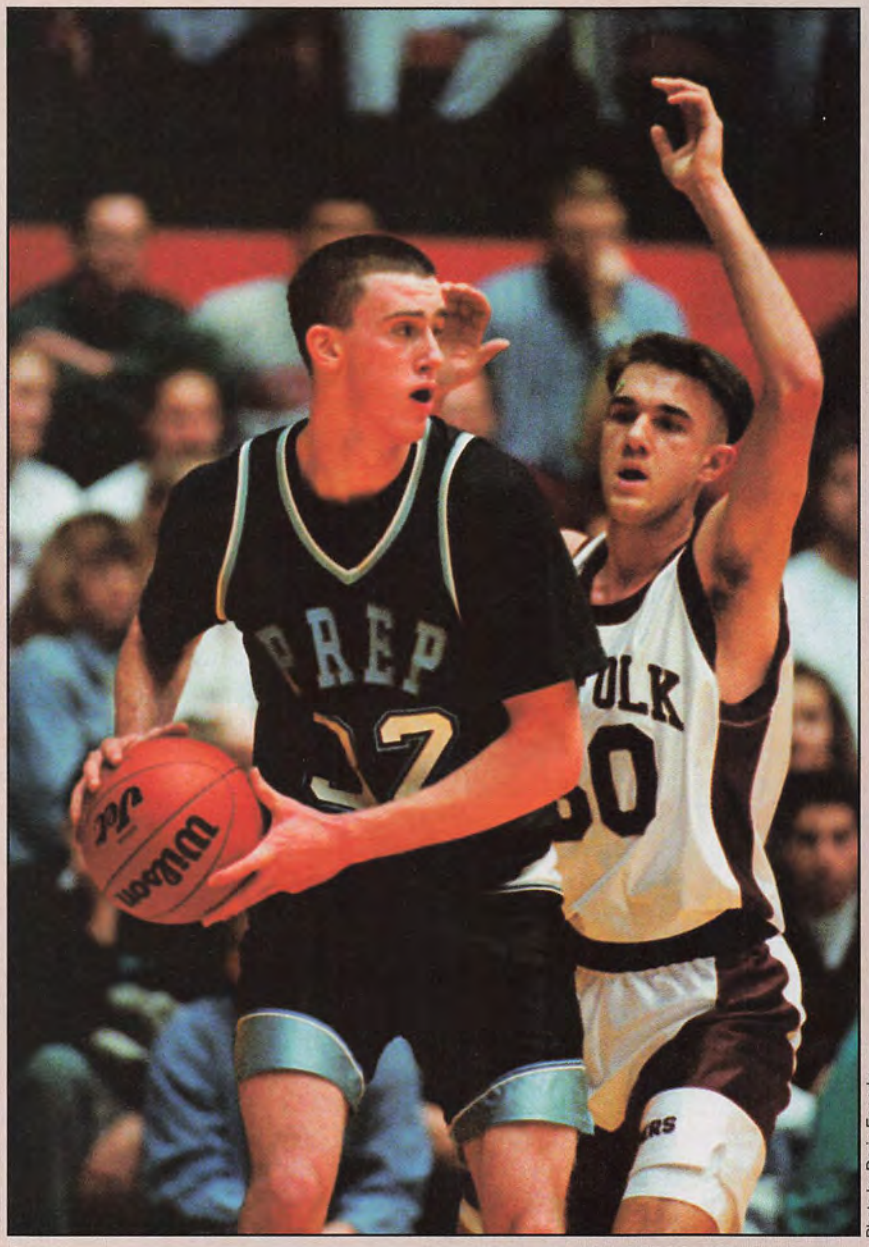

Photo by Darin Epperly

T.J. Pugh

by Chuck Green

IT'S IRONIC THAT THE FINAL game for Creighton Prep's T.J. Pugh was a loss.

It's something the 6-foot-9 forward and three-year starter for the Junior Jays isn't used to.

He's hoping that in the next few years, losses are just as few and far between.

Pugh will attend the University of Kansas next fall. He chose the Jayhawks over Creighton, Marquette, Nebraska, Purdue and Stanford.

His decision, he said, was based primarily on his recruiting trip to Lawrence, Kan.

"Down there, the atmosphere just felt better," Pugh said. "Basketball is such a big thing there. Also, I just think my style of play is better-suited for Kansas than it would have been here."

Pugh finished the regular season averaging 26 points and 9.8 rebounds per game. No other player in Class A finished the season averaging more than 20 points per game.

He also entered the state tournament with an average of 2.5 blocked shots per game.

Creighton Prep finished the season with a 17-10 record, losing to Millard South, 37-30, in the semifinals of the Boys State Tournament at the Bob Devaney Sports Center in Lincoln. In the game against Millard South, Pugh scored 20 points, including 7 of 13 from the free-throw line.

In the first round of the tournament, in Creighton Prep's 64-57 win over Norfolk, Pugh scored 27.

Pugh said he was surprised at the way the semifinal game against Millard South unfolded.

"It was a real ugly game," he said. "It looked like something right out of the 1940s. Neither team was hitting their shots, and that's just the way it was the whole night."

Pugh said he won't let his career be marred by that single loss in this year's state tournament.

"I've had a great time playing basketball at Prep," he said. "I have a great time playing basketball, period." NSM

Thibault Leads U.S. to Pan-Am Silver Medal

Omaha Racers Coach Mike Thibault led Team USA to a silver-medal finish at the Pan American Games in Mar del Plata, Argentina, losing 90-86 to the host Argentine team in the gold-medal game.

The team, comprised of Continental Basketball Association players, was the third U.S. team to fail to win the gold medal. The last tow teams were made up of college players.

Argentina shot 70 percent from the field in the first half.

Thibault, who has coached the Racers for six years, has led the Omaha franchise to the CBA playoffs five times, including four appearances in the conference finals, two trips to the CBA Championship series and one CBA title.

It was Thibault's second appearance on a Team USA coaching roster. He coached the USA Basketball COPABA World Championship Qualifying Tournament Team to a 6-1 record and the gold medal in San Juan, Puerto Rico in 1993.

Craig Bohl Becomes NU Linebackers Coach

Former Cornhusker defensive back Craig Bohl has been hired as Nebraska's linebacker coach.

Bohl, who was a reserve monster back for the Huskers from 1977 to 1979, comes to Lincoln from Duke, where he was the defensive coordinator and inside linebackers coach during the 1994 season. Prior to his job with the Blue Devils, Bohl served as defensive coordinator at Rice (1989-93), linebacker coach at Wisconsin (1987-88), linebacker coach at Tulsa (1985-86) and secondary coach at North Dakota State (1984).

He also was a graduate assistant at Nebraska from 1981 to 1983.

Bohl earned a degree in business management in 1981.

He replaces Kevin Steele, who resigned as Nebraska's linebackers coach in early January to accept the job of defensive coordinator for the expansion Carolina Panthers of the National Football League.

Nebraska Coach Tom Osborne said was pleased to have Bohl back with the Huskers.

"His primary coaching duties for the past 10 years have been with the linebackers," Osborne said. "He has recruited Texas, the Carolinas, Florida and Georgia, which is what we were looking for. He's a hard worker, of sound character, with a great deal of experience, and he has been quite successful."

Bohl also is happy to be returning to Lincoln.

"I'm thrilled," he said. "In this profession, it's not very often that you get to choose the person you want to work for or live in the area you want to live in.

"I'm coming into the best of both worlds."

Husker Swim Teams Finish 1st, 3rd in Big Eight

The Nebraska women's swimming and diving team won the Big Eight title Feb. 25, while the men's team finished third.

The Husker women outscored second-place Iowa State 636-558, winning six of the seven events to capture their second-straight title.

"I was real pleased with how everything went," said Coach Cal Bentz. "It's good to see the women rewarded for all of the hard work they do."

The Husker men finished 30 points behind first-place Iowa State. It was the first time the Nebraska men's team returned to Lincoln without the conference crown in 15 years.

"Stranger things have happened," Bentz said. "You win some and you lose some."

State Volleyball Stars To Remain in Nebraska

Three All-State volleyball players have signed letters of intent to continue their playing careers with Nebraska or Creighton.

Lincoln East's Jaimie Krondak and Omaha Marian's Renee Saunders signed with Nebraska, while Bellevue West star Cheri Pribyl is headed for Creighton.

Krondak, a 6-foot outside hitter, was a first-team Mizuno High School All-America selection, while Saunders was a two-time Nebraska Super State Selection.

Pribyl, a 5-6 setter, earned all-state honors her junior and senior seasons while playing for the three-time state champions.

Creighton also signed Cari Maxwell, a 5-6 player from Blair who helped the Bears to the Class B state semifinals last season.

Bellevue East's Bill James Retires

Bill James, who has coached Bellevue East High School football teams since 1956, has retired, ending the Metro Conference's longest football coaching reign.

James, 63, began his coaching career in 1952 as an assistant at Loup City. He was hired as coach at Arapahoe, where he spent three seasons before coming to what was then Bellevue High — which later became Bellevue East — in 1956. He compiled a 195-144-9

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record and took the Chieftains to the Class A playoffs twice.

His career coaching record is 210-155-9.

Nebraska Wrestlers Win Big Eight Tournament

The No. 3-ranked Nebraska wrestling team captured its second conference team title in three years March 5, beating second-ranked Oklahoma State 83.5-67-5 at the NU Coliseum in Lincoln.

Nebraska had four individual champions and five third-place finishers — all of whom earned automatic bids to the NCAA Championships March 16-18 at Carver-Hawkeye Arena in Iowa City, Iowa.

Nebraska was in third place heading into the final round, trailing Oklahoma and Oklahoma State, which had scored of 53 and 47 points respectively. Nebraska finished the round 10 points ahead of Oklahoma State, and coasted through the finals for the championship

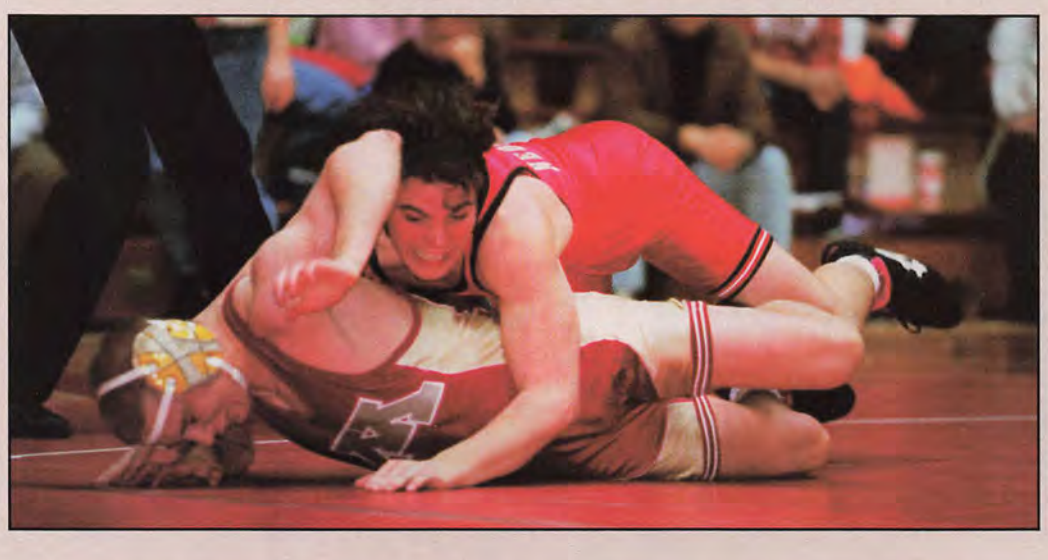
Westside Girls, Burke Boys Win State

The Omaha Westside girls swimming and diving team won its first state title in six years, while the Omaha Burke boys team held off Millard South to capture its first championship.

The finals were Feb. 25 in Lincoln at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

In the girls competition, Westside was led by Irene Schneider who won the 200-yard individual medley and Beth Williams who won the 100 fly. Schneider and Williams teamed with Jenny Patton and Yasmin Saad to capture the 200 freestyle relay championship.

Burke's Mike Jung won the 500 freestyle, and the Bulldogs' 200 freestyle relay team — Steve Jackson, Lance Larsen, Jeremy Solt and Zach Weiss — also picked up gold medals.



Nebraska Track Teams Win Big Eight Title

The Nebraska men's and women's track teams won the Big Eight Indoor Track and Field Championships in Manhattan, Kan., Feb. 25.

The Husker women captured their 16th consecutive conference title, outdistancing second-place Kansas State 184-131, while the Nebraska men's team captured its second straight crown. NSM

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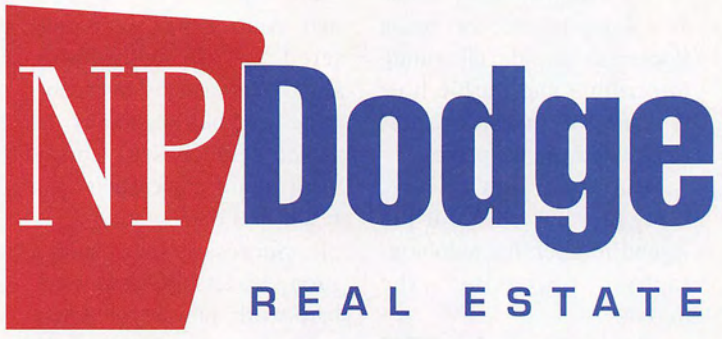

Mourning the Demise of Athletics

SPRING IS IN THE AIR with major league baseball in a serious deep-freeze. We could continue this wake, but at what cost? The cost of ignorance to other, better games people are willing to play.

Potpourri month here in Out of Bounds so, upon further review, the captain has asked that we pull our seats upright, fasten the seat belt and be certain our tray tables are locked in their upright position.

Greg Louganis lost me. Greg Louganis blew it with me.

I, like the rest of the planet, watched and cheered for this good guy in his Olympic quest from 1976 to 1988. He won almost as much gold as admiration. He truly became a living legend. And, so it seemed, only he could alter it. He has.

Louganis has been infected with HIV and, subsequently, that dreadful AIDS. The other day, he found it necessary to play public racquetball with this news in the form of a "tell all" interview. The clear details of his life of homosexuality made the public conscience for the better part of a week. He speaks of keeping secret the HIV infection, his gay lifestyle and his fear that a diving accident might infect others. I was terribly perplexed by it all and very disappointed.

This is neither a defense nor a condemnation of his homosexuality. That isn't the point. Each should be granted the individual freedom preserved by the Constitution. But what business is it of mine or yours? None! Why was it necessary to let me know? Why can't people keep their personal affairs just that? Simple: He has a book to sell. Louganis is a capitalist.

By using his lofty status as a living legend, the media flocked to his side, all willing to scribble and burble how this icon of American sport has fallen from the perch.

But he didn't care. Louganis has sold out his legend to hock his autobiography, "Breaking the Surface."

Regrettably, he has AIDS and may well die from it. Sadly, it will be in that manner that many will remember him; not with visions of his acrobatic, heroic, brave, artistic and graceful dives before the adoring masses.

Most coaches no longer coach. Most coaches don't instruct, inspire, discipline or manage. Coaches negotiate and compromise. Take the recent Nebraska vs. Kansas game at Bob Devaney Sports Center in Lincoln. The home-team Cornhuskers lost by more than 20 points. The visiting Jayhawks had superior talent, a better game plan, excellent coaching strategy and demonstrated the necessary mettle to win. It was a bad night for the Big Red.

The loss further frustrated the home fans who pay a premium for the right to be there — and the right to be foul after losses and unsatisfied after wins.

So it was. After the game, excuses abounded. After the game, it wasn't "I didn't play well," or "It was my fault." No, after the game, "It was the substitution policy."

Comments of that type were unheard of 20 years ago. And, if they were muttered, the kid was admonished, shunned by his teammates and blackballed by the coach. Successful sports teams don't come about as a result of a democratic principle. Success is the result of strong leadership, team unity, hard work, humility and synergized devotion by all.

To me, the pressure is getting to all of us. The stove is on. The heat is unhealthy. Beyond the white lines, sports is becoming about survival, not about winning. Nowhere is this collapse of what is good and correct more clearly obvious than in the media. That's right, I confess. Where's the legal pad?

Here's my confession: We're not always part of the solution. Now, in sports, we're a part of the problem. Maybe the worst part.

This is the story of broadcast mediums competing for the right to "get the story." This is the unholy tale of how radio and television reporters seek to shock the audience with the outlandish to the unbelievable. KFOR-TV in Oklahoma City found it necessary to label Jason Sutherland of Missouri as "the Big Eight's dirtiest player." I've met Jason Sutherland twice in my life. Unsportsmanlike is the last adjective I'd use to describe the kid. He's as wholesome as 2 percent milk. He was the target this time. Who's next?

We in the media are suffering. Most of us are miserable. The financial pressures on newspapers and broadcasters to win a large share of the market are greater now than ever. Deregulation has brought proliferation to radio and television. It's much more difficult to make livable wages and cover expenses today than 20 years ago. The result has been a dose of "one-upsmanship" in the heat of intensive competition. In Denver, there are now four sports talk programs on local radio, competing with two major newspapers and four fully staffed television stations. Each requires its talent to get the scoop on the newsmakers. In turn, the sniping has hardened the edge of the coaches and athletes. They play favorites with reporters one day, verbally assault them the next.

Not only did the pioneers get the story, but most of all, they got along. NSM

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NP Dodge
REAL ESTATE

NEBRASKA'S March Madne

by Chuck Green
Photos by Eric Francis

State High School Basketball Tournament time in Lincoln is, to say the least, an unforgettable experience for anyone who has ever been lucky enough — and wise enough — to have attended.

The sights, sounds and smells that fill the Bob Devaney Sports Center, Pershing Auditorium or any other game site during the first two weekends of March become permanent mental souvenirs for fans, compliments of the best basketball players Nebraska high schools have to offer.

The cheers, smiles and laughter blend with the boos, tears of frustration and crushing looks of defeat to weave a tapestry of sports pandemonium that warms the state every March.

Players, coaches and fans alike return home from the tournaments remembering what happened or dreaming of what might have been — and what might be next year.

Next year. For state tournament fans, win or lose, there's always next year. Even if their favorite team didn't make it, the tournament always returns.

Simply put, it's the state's very own version of March Madness.

This year's state tournaments were no different. The first two weekends of March saw 12 teams — six boys teams and six girls teams — crowned state champions. Twelve other teams left Lincoln wondering what might have been if they could have sank just a few more shots, hit a few more free throws or stolen the ball just a few more times.

That's part of the magic of state tournaments. Never being totally satisfied with what was accomplished, and always looking ahead to next year.

Many of the teams that participated in this year's tournaments will return next year. Some will not. And on every team, many of the players will have graduated. There will be new faces and new dreams. And new champions.

That never changes. ■

GIRLS

Class A
Lincoln Southeast 63
Omaha Bryan 44

It was a good day to be a Knight.

Lincoln Southeast won its third-straight Class A girls state championship by beating Omaha Bryan 63-44 at the Bob Devaney Sports Center. No other Class A school has ever won three titles in a row.

The Knights finished 25-0 for the season, and currently have a 32-game win streak. During the past three years, Southeast is 71-2.

Omaha Bryan finished the season at 20-5.

Kara Graham led the Knights with 19 points, while Emily Anderson added 17. Anderson connected on all five of her three-point shots.

"To say Emily was hot probably is an understatement," said Southeast Coach John Larsen. "She has a knack for stepping up in state tournament finals. I told her every game next year, we're going to tell her it's the state finals, and see if she can do the same thing."

Trisha Plucker added 16 for Southeast.

Omaha Bryan was led by Reshea Bristol, who led Class A scorers in the tournament with 63 points through three games — an average of 21 points per game.

Southeast led 33-28 at halftime, thanks to Anderson's three-pointer as time ran out. In the third quarter, the Knights went on a 17-0 run to extend their lead to 61-38 with 2:24 remaining in the quarter.

"They're just such a dangerous team," Bryan Coach John Green said. "They've got so many kids who can stick the shot. We had several windows in the third quarter where, if we could have hit a shot here or there, we could have been in it.

"We had them right where we wanted them, and they'd just hit some threes."

Graham, a senior, said the Knights played exactly the kind of game they wanted to play.

"It was our pace the whole way through," she said. "We knew (Bryan) would be tired, because they had some starters who played most of their first two games. But for us, it was just our regular pace."

Anderson, a junior, said she like's Southeast's chances for a fourth-straight title.

"We're definitely going to try for it," she said. "Hopefully, we'll at least get another shot. That's all we want."

Class B
South Sioux City 65
Omaha Roncalli 62

Trish Martin hopes to someday coach basketball.

If she ever does, she undoubtedly will tell her players about her textbook performance in the 1995 Class B final.

Martin, a 6-0 junior, scored 32 points to lead her South Sioux City team to the state title with a 65-62 win over Omaha Roncalli. It was the first state championship the school has won in any sport.

Roncalli fans remembered Martin as the one who engineered South Sioux's 74-67 win over the Crimson Pride Jan. 17. She scored 33 points, including 16 of the Cardinals' 17 in the fourth quarter, to

hand then-No. 1-ranked Roncalli its first loss.

This time, the game was much closer.

Leading 62-60 with 1:09 left in the game, the Cardinals took the ball down the court and tried to run the last seconds off the clock to preserve the win.

"We were up by two and couldn't decide whether to pull the ball out or go to our bread-and-butter players," South Sioux City Coach Kelly Flynn said.

Martin, though, solved the dilemma with an 8-foot jump shot with 37 seconds left. After two free throws by Roncalli's Nicki Gargano with 21 seconds left, Martin was fouled. She hit her first free throw but missed the second. Neither team scored again.

Charlie Rogers added 17 points for South Sioux City. Natalie Kotrc led Roncalli with 24 points.

South Sioux City finished the season with a 25-1 record, while Roncalli dropped to 22-3, losing the second of three games with the Cardinals this season.

The game was the highest-scoring Class B final in the 19-year history of the state tournament.

Class C-1
Hastings Adams Central 36
Columbus Scotus 30

Sometimes, slow is good.

Just ask James Landwehr, coach of the Hastings Adams Central girls basketball team.

Make that the state champion Hastings Adams Central girls basketball team.

The Lady Patriots decelerated from their usual fast-paced offensive style to adapt to Columbus Scotus' slow-paced attack to win the Class C-1 title 36-30.

At the end of the first quarter, Adams Central led 6-4.

"Scotus got us playing their game tonight, and we responded well to it" Landwehr said. "We ended up playing their game and still won. That's not our style to play that disciplined and set up every time."

Adams Central shot 56.5 percent from the field and held the Shamrocks scoreless in the game's last 5:12.

Michelle Lemonds led the Lady Patriots with 10 points. LeAnn Weeks added eight and finished the three-game tournament with a Class C-1-leading 52 points — an average of 17.3 points per game.

Adams Central finished its season with a 21-3 record, while Columbus Scotus fell to 19-6.

Kim Ricket, a 5-9 freshman, led Columbus Scotus with 10 points.

"We struggled to execute at times," said Columbus Scotus Coach John Peterson. "When we got some breaks, we didn't quite take enough advantage of it."

Peterson was surprised to learn that his Shamrocks shot only 2 of 10 from three-point range.

"Is that what it was?" he said. "Well, you're not going to win many games with 2 of 10 three-point shooting."

Class C-2
Cambridge 64
Sandy Creek 57

The streak continues.

Cambridge won the Class C-2 title with a 64-57 win over Sandy Creek, and kept adding to its state-record win streak, which stands at 73.

In the past three seasons, Cambridge

has posted records of 24-0, 24-0 and 25-0, sandwiching a Class C-1 title last year with C-2 championships in 1993 and this year.

Earlier this season, Cambridge won its 67th consecutive game to capture the state win-streak record with a 63-25 win over Alma. Hastings St. Cecilia held the old record with its streak that lasted from 1976 to 1979.

Tara Streit, who scored 20 points for the Trojans and finished the tournament with a Class C-2-leading 68 points, said she was thrilled by the ever-growing record.

"We came in here with a 72-game win streak, and I wanted to leave here with 73," she said. "These have been the best three years of my life, playing basketball at Cambridge."

Streit scored 14 points and pulled down 10 rebounds in the first half.

Cambridge Coach Bob Tomlin said he was pleased with Streit's performance.

"She stepped it up on her own," he said. "I talked to her about it, and she said, 'Well, I knew I had to.' She's become a great player."

Tomlin said Sandy Creek's defense was the toughest he had seen all season.

"But I wasn't worried about our girls' response," he said. "We've responded well all year, so there was no reason to doubt them this time."

Nicole Kubik led Cambridge with 21 points.

Mary Ann Ruf, who has started every game for Cambridge since her freshman year — and helped compile a 91-2 record during that period — added 14 for the Trojans.

Sandy Creek was led by Kristin Lavene's 23 points, while Carissa Paus added 16 for the 24-2 Cougars.

Class D-1
Axtell 67
Litchfield 55

Monica Osborn stood in the post-game interview room, tightly clutching Axtell's newly won Class D-1 championship trophy.

Around her neck was one of the nets, with her gold medal on top of it.

Her eyes were quickly welling up with tears.

Osborn, who became Nebraska's career scoring leader with 18 points against Bancroft-Rosalle in the semifinals, had just capped her stellar four-year high school career with a 32-point performance that extended her record to 2,116 points in Axtell's 67-55 win against Litchfield.

But all Osborn could think about was

her prep career that had come to a close.

"I wish I could have them back," Osborn said of her last four years. "I'm happy to go out a winner, but at the same time, I'm sad this is all over."

Steve Sampy, Axtell's coach and Osborn's mentor for the past four years, agreed.

"She's an excellent basketball player, a nice girl and I feel fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with her for the last four years," he said. "She makes everybody on our team better."

Osborn scored 87 points in the tournament.

Axtell started the game with a 20-6 lead, and led by as much as 17 points in the first half. The Wild Kittens then pounced on Litchfield in the second half, extending their lead to as much as 25 points.

The win finished a 23-0 season for the Wild Kittens, while Litchfield ended the year at 22-1.

Leslie Paulsen added 10 points for Axtell.

Litchfield was led by Meg Wilson's 16 points, while Melissa Rasmussen added 12. Leah Kucera pulled down 19 rebounds.

Class D-2
Chambers 68
Lawrence 55

Darcy Stracke had no idea how many points she had scored in Chambers' 68-55 win over Lawrence.

At first, she didn't care. But then it set in.

"How many? Thirty-nine?" she asked.

Those 39 points not only helped Stracke's Lady Coyotes win their second-straight state title — they won the Class D-1 title last year — but also gave her 94 points in her three tournament games, tying the single-game tournament record set by Adams' Trudy Veerhusen in 1987. She also set a state record for single-season points with 824, and trails Veerhusen by only 20 points in the state tournament career scoring category.

Still, the 5-7 junior was more impressed with the team's trophy than her own numbers.

"This was my third trip here (to the state tournament)," Stracke said. "I'm just happy we could win another one."

Chambers Coach John Miller, however, was pleased with both.

"When things go bad, she just takes over," he said of Stracke. "When all else fails, she just takes it to the hole."

Lawrence Coach Carroll Troudt also was impressed with Stracke.

"She's got to be one of the better players I've ever seen," he said.

Stephanie Kaczor added 18 points for the Lady Coyotes, who finished the season with a 26-0 record.

Tiffany Jarosik led 23-2 Lawrence with 19 points, while Mary Menke added 17.

Chambers forced Lawrence into 24 turnovers and scored the game's final nine points to ensure the victory.

BOYS

Class A
Lincoln Northeast 79
Millard South 53

Throughout the week of practice leading up to the state tournament, a photograph of Creighton Prep's 1994 state champion boys basketball team hung in the Lincoln Northeast locker-room.

That Creighton Prep team was the one that beat Northeast in last season's Class A final. It served as a reminder to the Rockets of their shattered dream last year — and as motivation this year.

It worked. Lincoln Northeast, led by Alton Mason's 28 points, streaked by Millard South 79-53 for its first state championship since 1982.

"This means as much to me as any other thing in my life, outside of my children and my wife," said Northeast Coach Rick Collura. "It's an absolute euphoria."

Northeast jumped to a 19-4 first-quarter lead, but Millard South cut the margin to six, 25-19, midway through the second quarter. The Rockets led 35-24 at halftime.

In the first eight minutes of the game, Millard South committed nine turnovers.

"Right off the bat, we didn't take care of the ball," said Millard South Coach Larry Ribble. "They (Northeast) played great defense."

In the second half, Northeast outscored the Indians 44-29 to coast to its ninth state title. In the final quarter, Northeast's lead was never less than 14 points.

Collura said he saw the determination in the faces of his players after the semi-final win over Omaha Burke the day before the final.

"After the Burke game, they were pretty quiet in the locker-room," he said. "It was like there was a bit of unfinished business."

Collura was 0-3 in state finals in his previous eight seasons at Northeast.

For Ribble, the game also meant the end of a streak: It was his first loss in six state finals.

Millard South, which finished the season with a 19-6 record, was led by Jon Paul Schieber's 16 points. Mark

Christensen added 13 for the Indians.

Mason, a junior point guard for the Rockets, called his 28-point performance "one of my better games this year."

Collura agreed.

"Alton is a great, great player," he said. "He works so hard."

Mason finished the tournament with a Class A-leading 62 points. Northeast finished the season with a 22-3 record.

And a state championship photo of their own.

Class B
Firth Norris 60
Lexington 59

With a little more than one minute to go in the Class B final, things looked dark for Firth Norris.

The Titans' leading scorer, Chris Boesiger, had fouled out of the game on a basket by Lexington's Ryan Bliven that tied the game 54-54. Moments earlier, Norris had led by seven points.

With 1:16 left, Bliven put the Minutemen ahead for the first time in the game, making it 56-54.

But Brandon Boldt provided the ray of sunshine the Titans needed. After teammate Nate Jasa tied the game 56-56 with 53 seconds left and was fouled, Boldt pulled down the rebound from the missed free throw and made a short shot to put Norris ahead for good.

"We got beat by a very good team," said Lexington Coach Chip Bahe. "We played a heck of a ballgame. Our kids had a lot of chances to roll over and die, but they didn't. They were in it until the very end."

Norris, which led 35-31 at halftime, was led by Boesiger's 19 points. Jasa and Isaak Russell added 17 and 10 points, respectively, for the Titans, who finished the season with a 24-1 record.

Lexington was led by Bliven and Justin Thomalla, who each scored 13 points. Josh Kuecker added 12 for the Minutemen, who finished with an 18-5 record.

Class C-1
St. Paul 55
Fairbury 42

Tom Mudloff led all scorers with 16 points, seven of which came in the final quarter, to lead St. Paul to the Class C-1

championship with a 55-42 win over Fairbury.

Mudloff had led the Wildcats throughout the tournament. In the first-round game, the 6-2 senior connected on a 24-foot jump shot with four seconds left to beat Hartington Cedar Catholic 49-48.

"He was the spark again tonight," said St. Paul Coach Rick Peters. "We can't say enough about him. We needed the spark and he got the job done. He has all year."

The game was, at best, an unlikely matchup. St. Paul, 24-2, had not been at the state tournament since 1929. Fairbury had beaten perennial power Wahoo in the first game, ending the Warriors' 47-game win streak. The Jeffs were the eighth-seeded Class C-1 team in the tournament.

"We were right there until the fourth quarter," Fairbury Coach Phil Seevers said.

Fairbury, which finished the season with an 18-8 record, was led by Ryan Haddan's 14 points. Sophomore Jon Beerbohm added 13 for the Jeffs.

Class C-2
Laurel-Concord 74
Lincoln Christian 59

It musta been the hats.

Laurel-Concord's players, fresh off the court after their 74-59 win over Lincoln Christian to capture the Class C-1 title, all sported bright orange hats they had bought at Wal-Mart the night before.

"They were our good-luck charms," said Jeremy Reinoehl, who led the Bears with 31 points.

Actually, the real luck came for Laurel-Concord when Lincoln Christian's players began chalking the game up as a win in the second quarter, according to Jared Reinoehl, Jeremy's brother.

"They were talking a lot out there on the floor," he said. "They were saying we were going to fold. That was what our halftime pep talk was about."

The game was tied 27-27 at halftime after the Bears had opened up a 14-8 lead in the first quarter.

Jeremy Reinoehl scored 17 of his 31 points in the fourth quarter, 15 of which came during a 19-4 scoring run by Laurel-Concord.

"He's Mr. Clutch," Jared Reinoehl said of his brother's performance.

"It's incredible," said Jeremy Reinoehl, who finished the tournament with 72 points. "It's a rush."

Laurel-Concord Coach Clayton Steele said he could get used to coming to the state tournament.

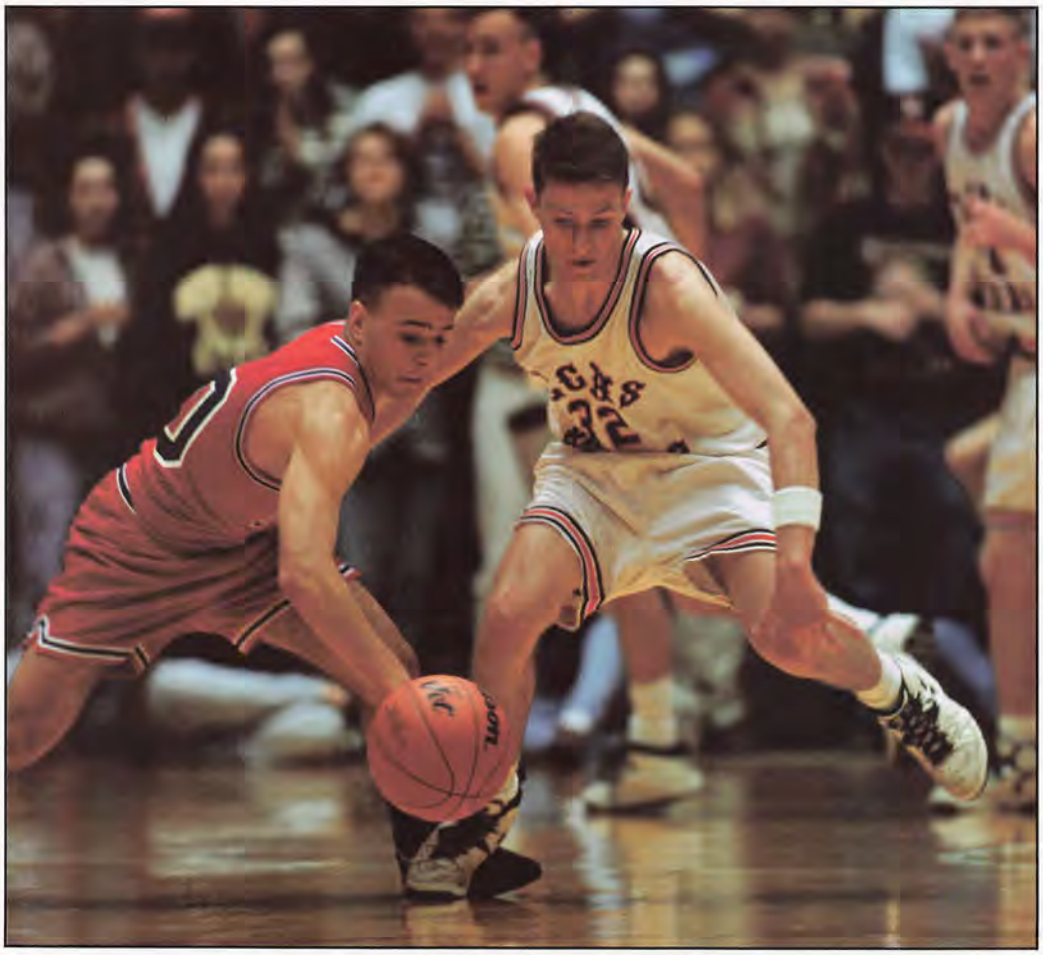
"We want to come back here and do it again sometime," he said.

Tyler Erwin added 19 points for Laurel-Concord, which finished the season with a 24-2 record, while Cody Carstensen added 10.

Lincoln Christian, 23-3, was led by Tim McEwen's 17 points. Matt Drevo added 12 for the Crusaders.

Class D-1
Paxton 54
Sterling 46

Paxton held Sterling to just five fourth-quarter points to win the Class D-1 title 54-46.



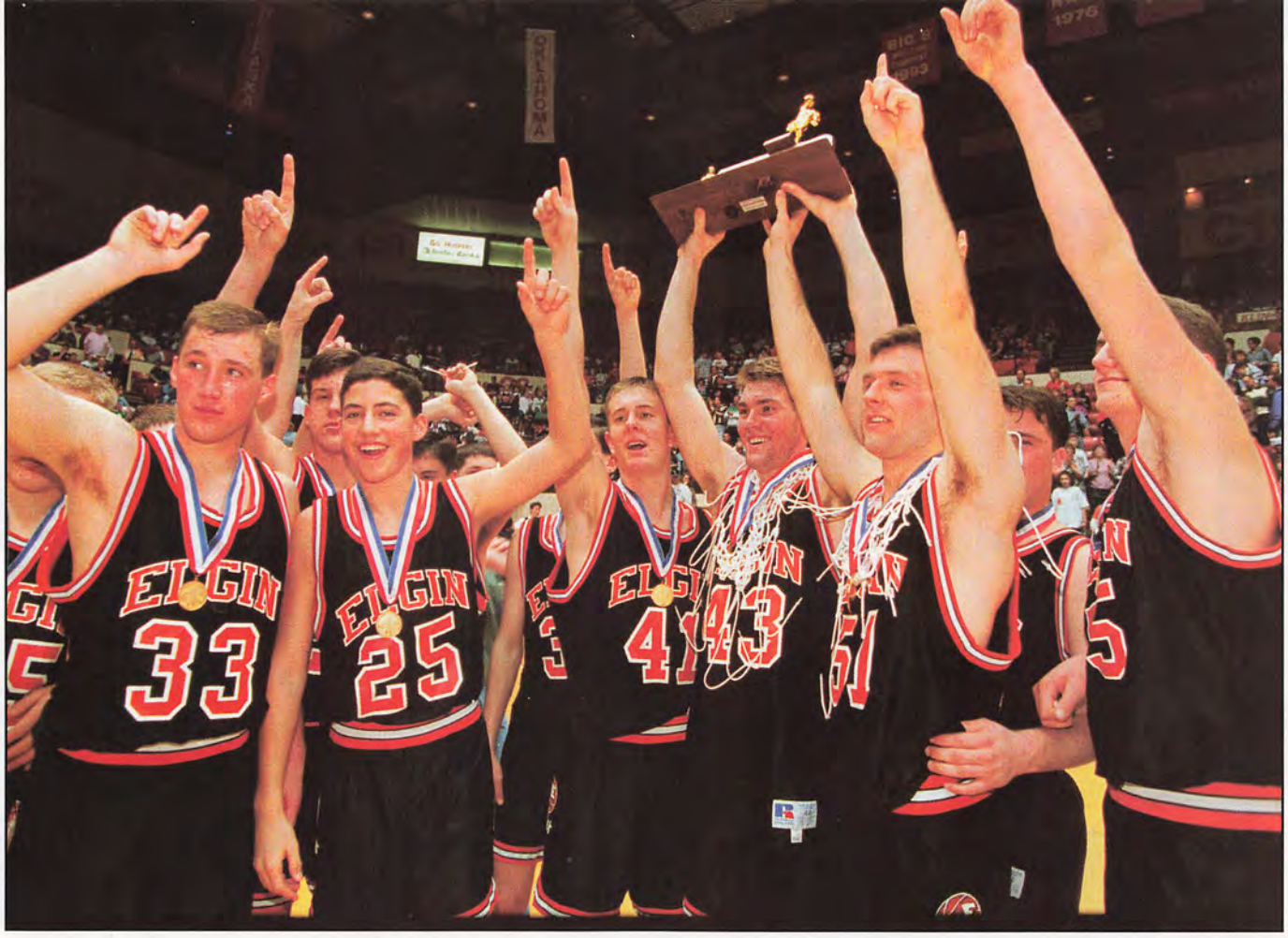
Paxton, 26-1, was led by Lindley Thompson, who sank 12 of 16 shots from the field to score 25 points. The junior scored 65 points in the Tigers' three tournament games.

"This team was extremely focused on what they thought they had to do to with this thing," said Paxton Coach Jody Rhodes. "In fact, I've never seen a team this focused."

Paxton had fallen short of their state title dreams the past two years, losing in the first round last season and in the semifinals in 1993. Sterling, on the other hand, had won Class C-2 titles the last two years, and entered the game with a 23-5 record.

They finished the game at 23-6.

"We played well for more than three quarters, but we lost it a little bit there at the end," said Sterling Coach Brad Buller.



Sterling led 41-34 at the end of the third quarter, but Paxton outscored the Jets 20-5 in the game's final eight minutes.

In addition to Thompson's 25 points, Paxton was led by Mitch Perlinger's 12 points. Sophomore Nick Krab added 10 points for the Tigers.

Sterling was led by Justin Haynes' 19 points. Haynes finished the three-game tournament with 63 points.

Class D-2
Elgin 51
Table Rock 39

As the fourth quarter started, Elgin trailed Table Rock 29-28.

But a 15-5 scoring run midway through the final period was more than enough for the Eagles to capture their second state title in three years.

B.J. Schmitt scored 17 points for Elgin.

"This was our year to win it," he said.

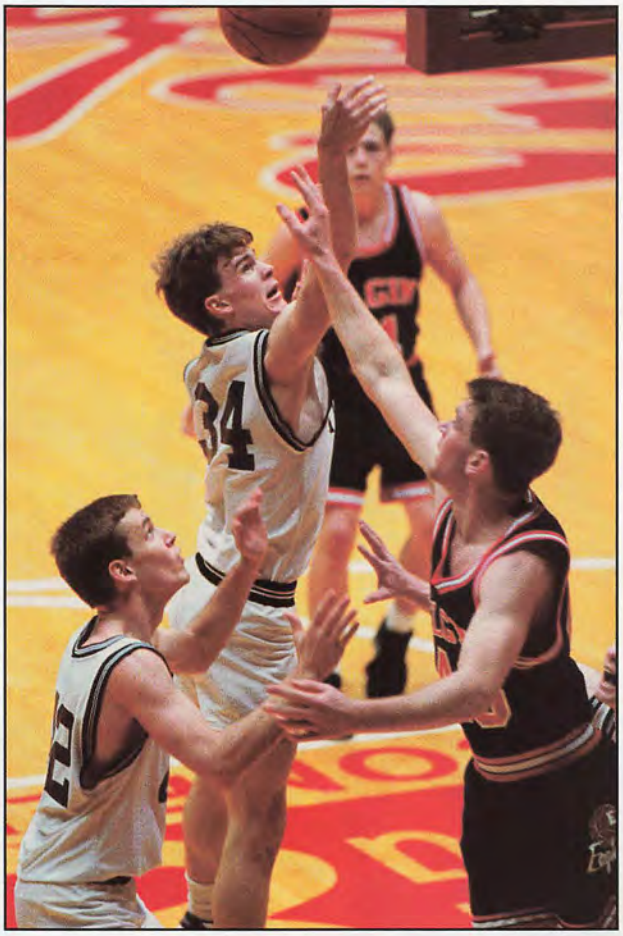
Elgin outscored Table Rock 23-10 in the final quarter, thanks mostly to their hard-pressing defense.

"Our press took them out of the flow of their offense," said Elgin Coach Phil Kluthe. "Every time we come to (the state tournament), our press has been very effective."

Table Rock, which finished the season with a 18-8 record, was led by Tyler Binder's 16 points, while Matt Cumro added 15 for the Tigers.

Earlier in the tournament, Cumro set the Class D-2 tournament record for most free throws in one game, with 17. He finished the tournament with 73 points.

Elgin's David Ochsner and Chris Sullivan added 15 and 12 points, respectively, for the Eagles. Ochsner added 12 rebounds. ■



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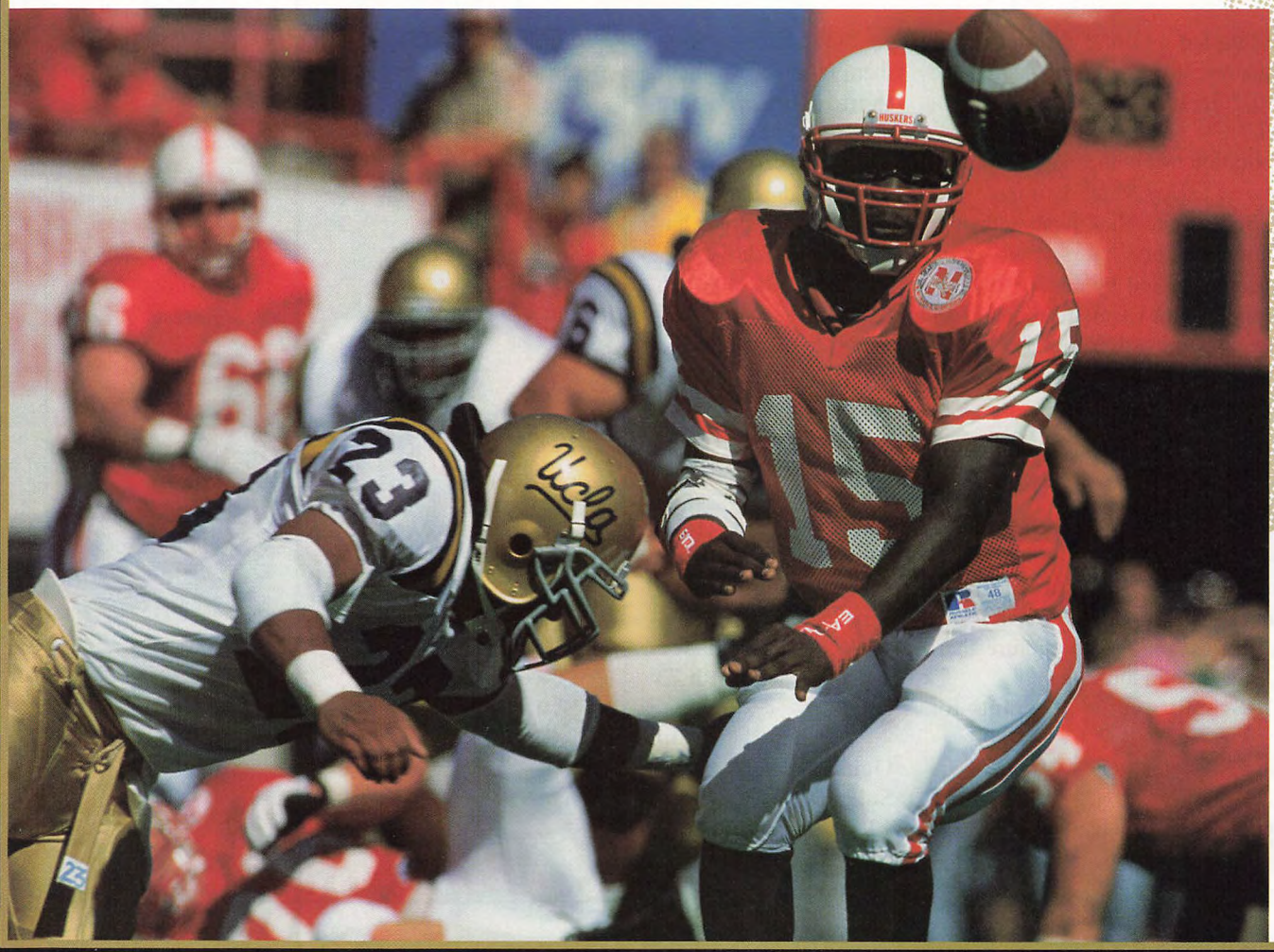

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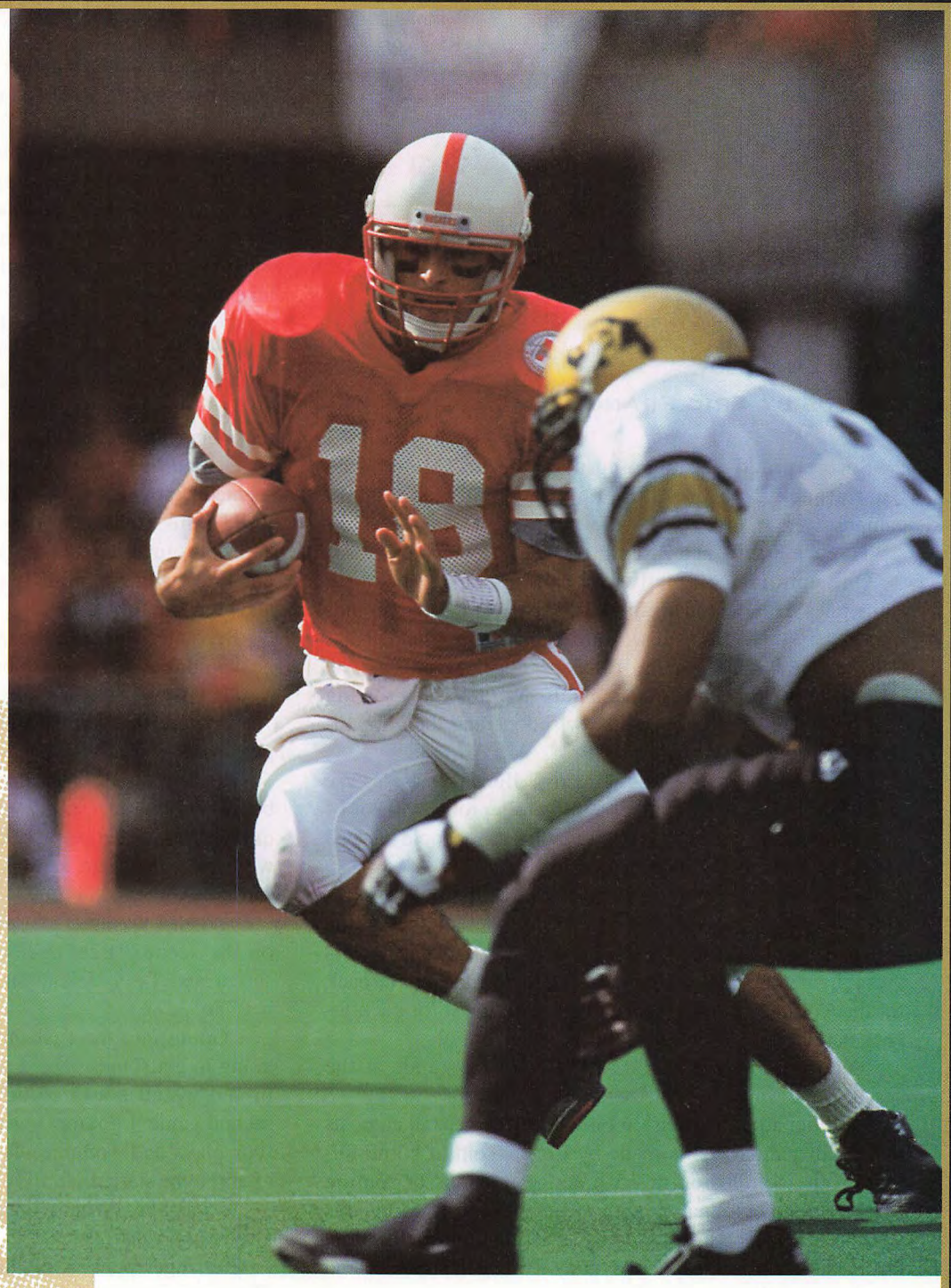


BEGINS

Brook Berringer and Tommie Frazier are set for a showdown as Cornhusker football fans wait for the word

by Sean Weide

Photos by Eric Francis

Spring practice is shaping up to be a "Tale of Two Quarterbacks" on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln campus.

Tommie Frazier and Brook Berringer.

One epitomizes a native Floridian – relaxed, loose, sometimes even free-wheeling. The other is a straight-and-narrow, by-the-book Midwesterner from Goodland, Kan. One captures the essence of speed and elusiveness. The other possesses sound fundamentals and a solid throwing arm. They are as different as the wishbone and the run-and-shoot.

"I don't think we're close friends," Berringer said. "We don't talk to each other much and there's probably a lot of different reasons for that. We're two different people who go out on the field and do their own thing."

While there are many questions surrounding Nebraska's 1995 football team, only one is sure to dominate springtime conversations in coffee shops and near office water coolers throughout the state: Who will be the starting quarterback for the Cornhuskers when they begin their quest for back-to-back national titles in September?

"You might have 75,000 people in the stands at the spring game waiting to find out," Frazier said.

Traditionally, the decision on who will enter fall camp as the No. 1 quarterback is made by Coach Tom Osborne following the conclusion of 15 practice sessions beginning March 27 and culminating with the annual spring game, this year on April 22. Using a grading system unique to Osborne, Nebraska's coaching staff will study films, log statistics and develop a depth chart for fall practice.

Theoretically, Frazier has made the stronger case of the two with his fourth-quarter heroics against Miami in the Orange Bowl, which earned him the game's Most Valuable Player award.

But with three returning quarterbacks possessing starting experience – seniors Frazier and Berringer and junior Matt Turman – Husker quarterbacks coach Turner Gill said the No. 1 spot may still be up for grabs when fall practice begins in August.

"We're probably going to name a No. 1 guy going into the fall, but I don't know if it's going to be etched in stone, or that he'll be the starter for the first game," Gill said. "It just depends on the closeness of the grades and other factors. The biggest factor, of course, will be turnovers."

Other questions also remain. Will the speculation and media attention surrounding the selection of a starter cast a cloud over spring drills and upset the delicate chemistry that existed during the "Looking For More In '94" campaign? Has Frazier overcome the blood clot in his leg that kept him out of eight games last season? And just where does Nebraska native Matt Turman, a scholarship recipient for the spring semester and a one-game starter, fit into the puzzle?

In Muhammad Ali fashion, Frazier said he is ready to take on all comers.

"I love competition. I thrive on competition," he said. "When I know there's someone breathing down the back of my neck, that's when the best comes out of me."

During separate, hour-long interview sessions with reporters on a chilly, gray February day in Lincoln, Frazier never broached the topic of being a backup, while Berringer seemed happy just to be in the running.

"I think Coach Osborne has two capable quarterbacks and both guys deserve to play," Berringer said. "I'm just thankful I'm getting finally getting the opportunity to go out and compete for the job."

Berringer wavers even more, however, when asked how he would feel if he were to be beaten out for the starting job.

"If I were the No. 2 guy, I'd rather split time," he said. "Of course, if I were the starter, I'd want to play as much as possible."

History proves that when it comes to evaluating quarterbacks, Osborne doesn't always follow protocol. Consider the quarterback situation in 1992 when Frazier and Berringer were freshmen and senior Mike Grant was the returning starter.

"When I was a redshirted freshman and Tommie arrived on the scene," Berringer recalled. "Mike Grant was the starter and Tony Veland and I were tied at No. 2. Tommie was No. 3.

"Going into the first three games, we were told we all going to get some snaps. I went in first and then Tony went in and we all got three or four plays the first game. The second game, I got three or four plays and Tony got three or four plays and Tommie played a whole quarter. The game after that he started.

"I was like, 'Where did this come from? Ever since then, I've really been. . ."

Berringer paused, bit his lip and finished his thought: "I've been determined to say the least."

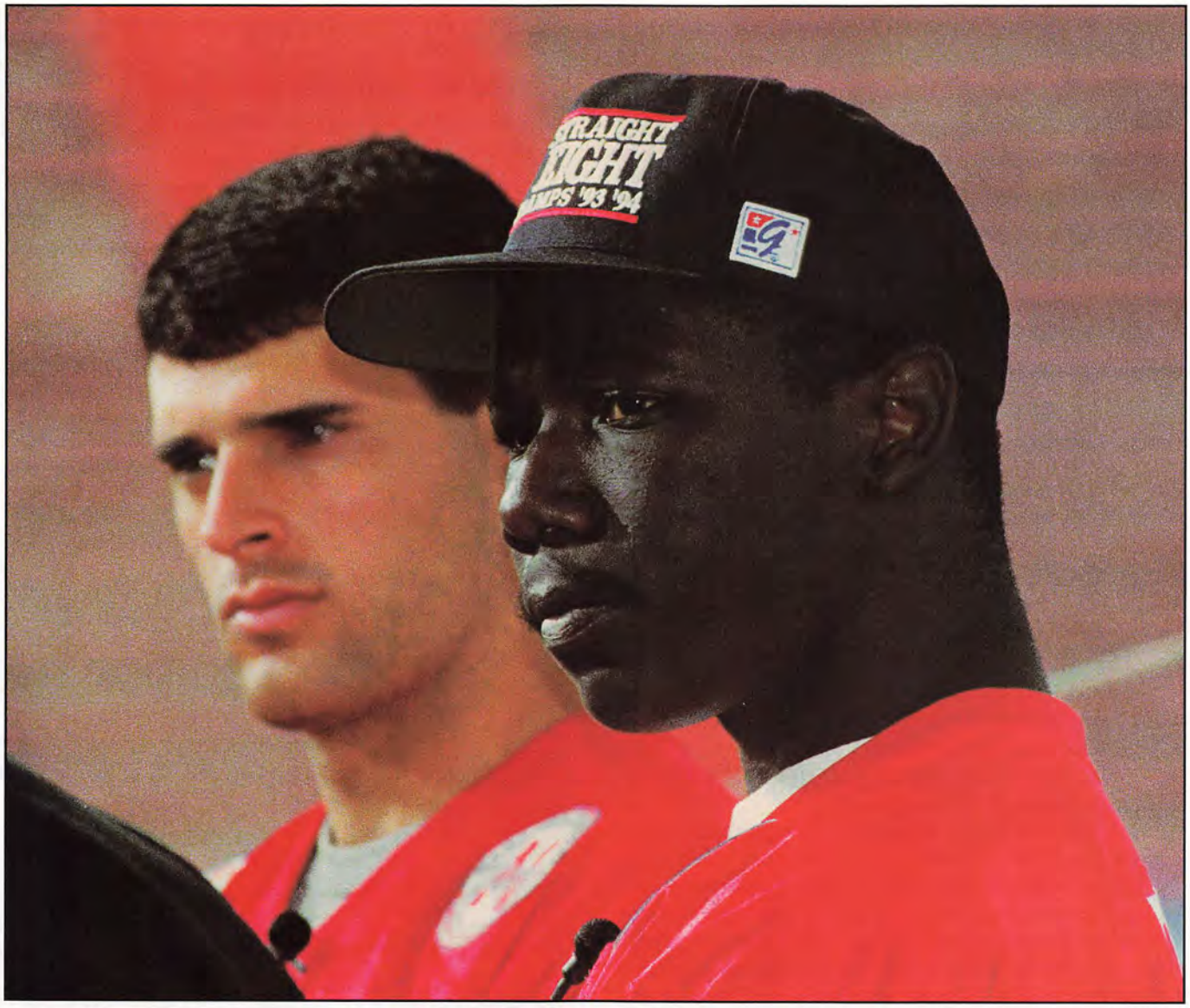
Osborne's reluctance to put the 6-foot-4, 210-pound Berringer on the field carried over even into the 1994 season.

"I don't think I earned Coach Osborne's confidence until I went out and performed in a game-type situation," he said.

Heading into the Orange Bowl, Osborne announced a starting quarterback would be determined based on a scrimmage a week before the game. Frazier, however, said Osborne's unwritten policy normally calls for an injured starting quarterback to regain his starting position upon his return to good health.

Berringer remembers the situation – which drew national media attention – quite well.

"It wasn't Tommie's fault that he got hurt and it wasn't my fault that I played well," Berringer said. "I just felt like,



Regardless of who starts, Berringer (left) and Frazier both are prepared to make another run at the national title.

hey, I got us where we are and I think I deserved a shot. By the same token, Tommie deserved a chance to start or at least compete for it. I had a chance to start that game. It just didn't work out that way."

Thrust into the starter's job in the fifth game of the season, Berringer was initially looked upon as a temporary fix, a Band-Aid of sorts, until the extent of Frazier's injury could be properly diagnosed. When it was learned Frazier's condition possibly meant the end of his football career, Berringer stepped forward to keep Nebraska's national championship hopes alive.

"Confidence is my biggest factor," Berringer said. "Sometimes a guy that comes from a small school that hasn't had the competition that a lot of guys he's playing against have had, then confidence is a big problem.

"I told myself at the beginning of the year that I was going to go into the whole season preparing for every game like I was the starter. It paid off when I was finally called upon."

Berringer completed 62 percent of his passes for 1,295 yards and 10 touchdowns. In Nebraska's 45-17 win over Kansas, he threw for 267 yards – the most by a Husker since Osborne's first season as head coach in 1972.

"It's a great situation to have two really outstanding quarterbacks," Gill said. "We know both guys can play and that we can win a Big Eight championship and a national championship with either one."

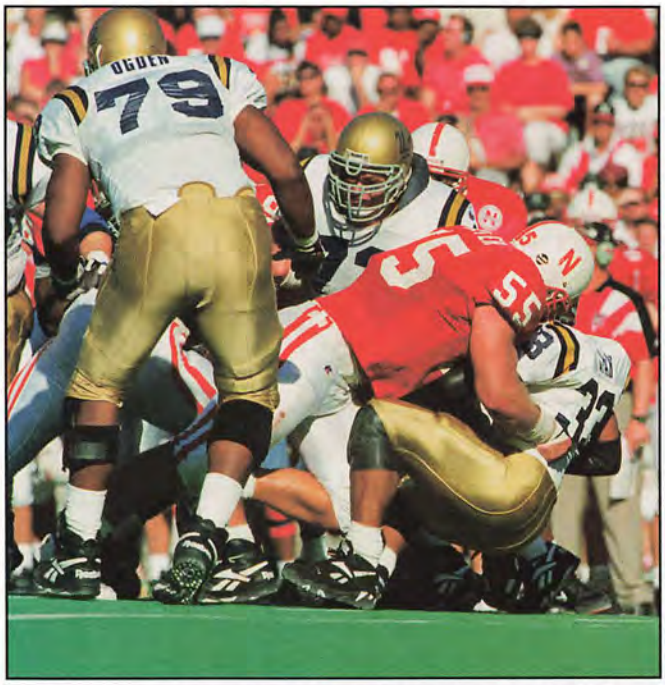
Frazier and Berringer seem to agree, however, that rotating quarterbacks – as they did in the Orange Bowl – or sharing the starting duties, is a bad idea.

Frazier cited the Oklahoma game as an example.

"I think that was one of the reasons Brook got off to a slow start," Frazier said. "He knew if he made a major mistake the coaches would pull him."

For as many differences as there are between Frazier and Berringer, there are some similarities.

Both avoid reading the sports sections or watching anything sports-oriented, other than ESPN, during the season. Neither purchased any national championship apparel or memorabilia, or even watched a replay of the Orange Bowl.



Nebraska's defensive line will be anchored by tackle Christian Peter.

And above all, they both value their privacy.

"I haven't been able to go anywhere without having to sign an autograph or two," Frazier said.

"I have trouble walking down the street without somebody recognizing me," Berringer said.

Although depth isn't a question at quarterback, it is a concern at several key defensive positions.

Charlie McBride, Nebraska's defensive coordinator, said strengthening the linebacker and defensive end positions will be the focus of spring practice. All-America weakside linebacker Ed Stewart and All-Big Eight strongside linebacker Troy Dumas are gone, as is defensive lineman Terry Connealy.

"We have to develop depth at our defensive ends, we have to find replacements for Stewart and Dumas, and in the secondary, and we have to fit the personnel to our needs," McBride said. "We'll really work hard in the spring to find out who the people will be behind our first team players."

The secondary is the least of McBride's worries. Four of the top six players return including right cornerback Tyrone Williams, free safety Tony Veland and a roverback Mike Minter, who missed most of last season after tearing his anterior cruciate ligament against Texas Tech.

"That's encouraging, because we're not sitting in the situation where we don't have combinations that we could put on the field who have demonstrated they can play well," said George Darlington, Nebraska defensive backs coach.

And with several other key offensive skill position players returning – I-back Lawrence Phillips, wide receiver Reggie Baul and tight end Mark Gilman – it's not too early to begin talking about a run at a second consecutive national championship.

"I'm taking it as a personal challenge," said center Aaron Graham, the lone returning starter from last year's offensive line. "I don't want anything less than what we had last year." ■

Rebuil

Among the dozens of statistical categories logged in college football, there will be no official NCAA statistics to document just how dominating Nebraska's 1994 offensive line really was.

The evidence is there, but much like a battle between two opposing linemen in the trenches, it is not easily spotted.

In 897 offensive snaps last season, the Husker offensive line only was flagged five times for holding. During 13 games, the same linemen surrendered just six quarterback sacks with three different quarterbacks calling the signals.

There are some names behind the numbers, however, which testify to the greatness of last year's offensive line starters: tackles Zach Wiegert and Rob Zatechka, center Aaron Graham and guards Brenden Stai and Joel Wilks.

The play dominant of the Huskers' front five was best exemplified in Nebraska's 17-6 win over Kansas State on a cold, damp day in Manhattan.

ding the Wall

With Brook Berringer nursing a collapsed lung and neophyte walk-on quarterback Matt Turman at the helm, Nebraska pinned its hopes solely on the legs of running back Lawrence Phillips. Knowing the inexperienced Turman was not a Tommie Frazier-style option threat, the Wildcat defense waited with open arms for every Phillips carry.

"They knew when Turman was in there that we weren't going to throw much," Nebraska Coach Tom Osborne said.

As it turned out, Kansas State's eight-man defensive front was continually manhandled and shoved around by Nebraska's front five. In all, Phillips carried the ball 31 times for 117 yards as Nebraska outrushed the Wildcats by 217 yards on the slippery turf at Wagner Field.

Reflecting on the loss of Zatechka, Wilks, Outland Trophy winner Wiegert and All-American Brenden Stai, Graham tends to speak in a reverent, third-person-removed tone.

"That line was great," said Graham, who followed his words with a thoughtful, meditative pause. "I don't even know what to say about it. They were such a phenomenal group. Year in and year out, the University of Nebraska football team puts out a great offensive line and there won't be anything less this year."

Graham plans to personally supervise the rebuilding of Nebraska's offensive line. He and prospective starters Eric Anderson (right tackle), Steve Ott (right guard), Aaron Taylor (left guard) and Chris Dishman (left tackle) have been lifting weights hard since mid-January.

"It would be foolish to think the line will be as good as the one we had last year, but we're not going to sit back and relax either," the fair-haired blond from Denton, Texas, said. "Anything less than No. 1 is not going to be as gratifying."

So just who will make up Nebraska's most inexperienced offensive line in the last four years?

Anderson was a USA Today first-team Blue Chip and SuperPrep All-America selection at Lincoln Southeast High School. The 6-foot-4, 295-pound sophomore redshirted his freshman season and missed most of spring practice last year with a stress fracture in his ankle.

Junior Adam Treu, a 6-6, 290-pound graduate of Lincoln Pius X High School, will contend with Anderson for the right tackle job.

Dishman, a 6-3, 305-pound junior from Cozad, backed up Zatechka at left tackle. He also struggled through spring ball a year ago, injuring his shoulder to the extent of requiring arthroscopic surgery.

Dishman was one of two in-state scholarship offensive linemen in the 1992 recruiting class. The other, Jeff Ogard of St. Paul, switched to the defensive line. Junior Kory Mikos of Seward and sophomore Fred Pollack, from Creighton Prep, are expected to contend for playing time as back-ups.

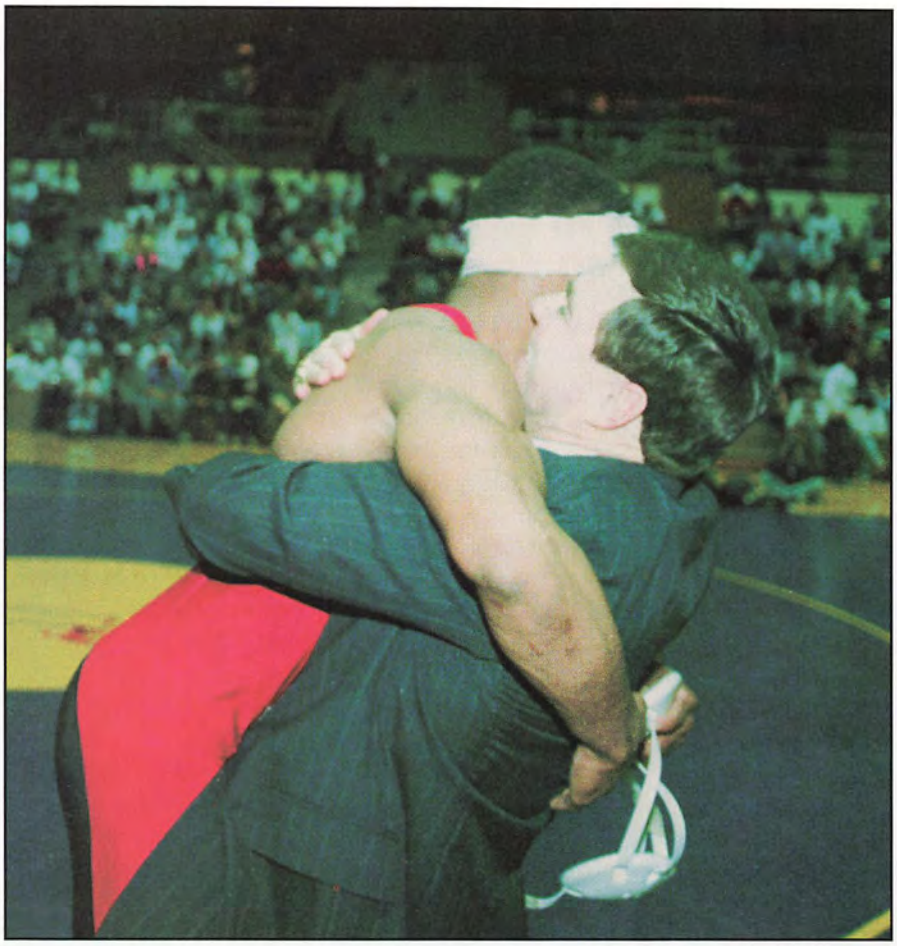
Ott, another in-state product from Henderson, suffered a broken leg during the Huskers' win at Kansas State. But the 6-4, 275-pounder is expected to fully recover from the injury.

Taylor, from Wichita Falls, Texas, was originally enticed to come to Nebraska by a fellow Texan, Graham. The 6-1, 290-pound sophomore will fill the left guard spot.

Milt Tenopir, who has supervised the building and rebuilding of Nebraska's offensive line for the past 21 years, said tradition plays as big a part as teaching, technique and talent.

"We have not had a lousy line for lots of years," Tenopir said. "Everybody has stepped up when it's been their turn, so I think this will be challenge the kids coming in.

"These guys undoubtedly will be on top of the heap and they know what it's going to take to stay there." ■



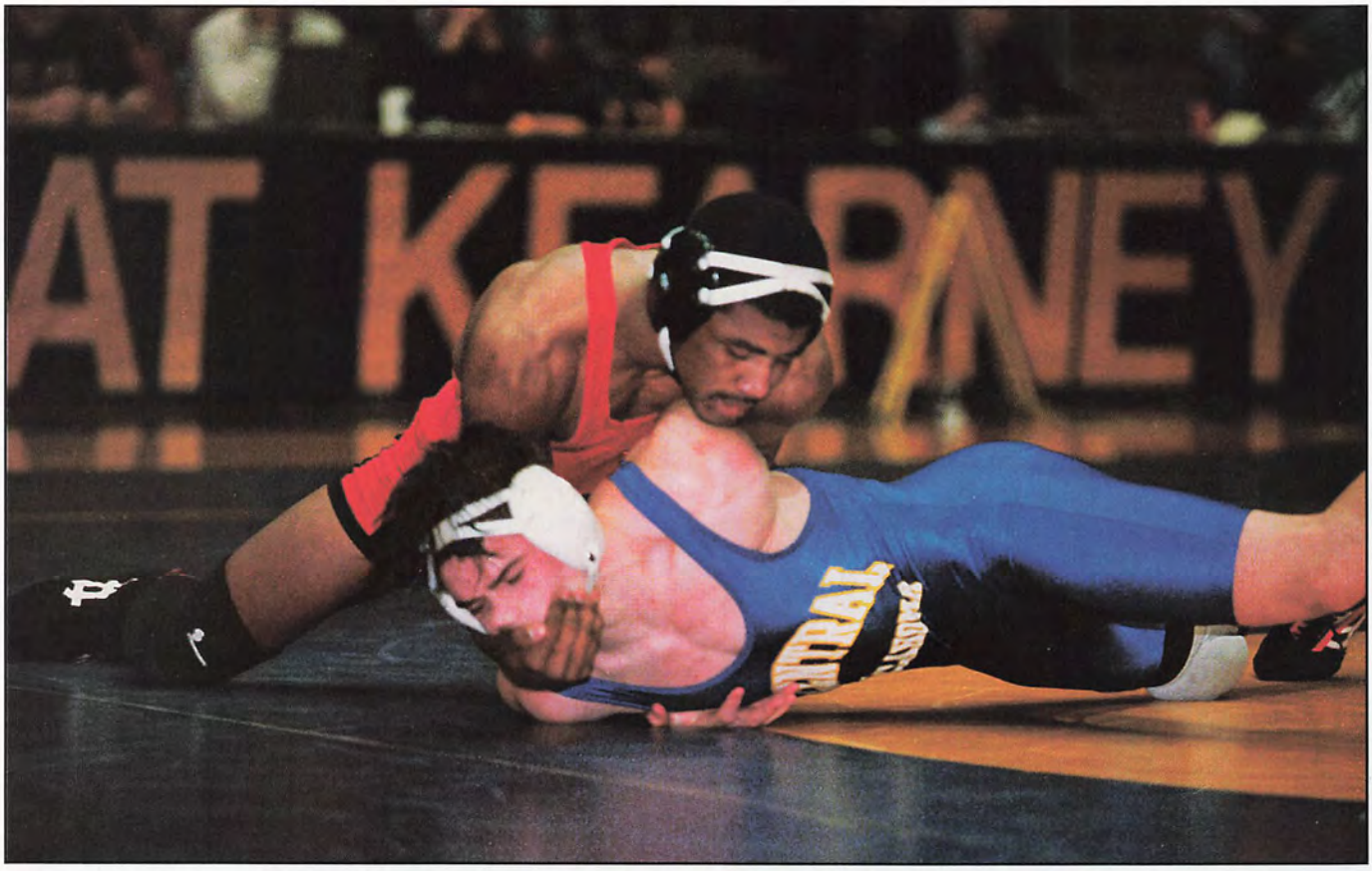
Satisfied With Second

by Chuck Green
Photos by Brad Norton

It wasn't good enough for first place, but it was good enough for Mike Denney.

The University of Nebraska at Omaha wrestling team finished second at the NCAA Division II wrestling meet in Kearney March 3-4, 45 points behind national champion Central Oklahoma.

Even though the Mavericks couldn't capture their second national wrestling title, Denney — UNO's coach — couldn't have been more pleased with his young team's performance.



Ralph Kizzee won the title in the 167-pound weight class.

"I thought we performed as well as we possibly could have," said Denney, who just finished his 16th season at UNO.

Of the 35 teams represented at the tournament, held at the University of Nebraska at Kearney Health and Sports Center, Nebraska-Kearney was the only other team from Nebraska to finish in the top 10, at No. 7. Chadron State finished 18th.

Central Oklahoma, ranked No. 1 entering the tournament, scored 148 points to take the title, with UNO's 103 placing the Mavericks 18.5 points ahead of third-place North Dakota State.

"That's the most points we've ever scored at the national tournament, and we still couldn't beat Central Oklahoma," Denney said. "They're quite a team."

Three UNO wrestlers qualified for the finals, and two of them — Brian Zanders and Ralph Kizzee — came away with individual championships.

Zanders, one of four Maverick seniors this season, beat Central Oklahoma's Shawn Bateman 13-7 to win the title in the 150-pound weight class, while Kizzee, a junior, came from behind to beat Justin Smith of Mankato State 5-4 at 167.

Lim Prim, UNO's man at 118, lost 8-0 to North Dakota State's Brian Kapusta. It was Kapusta's third consecutive title, and he was named the meet's outstanding wrestler.

Four other Mavericks earned All-America status by finishing among the top eight in their respective weight classes. Senior Jimmie Foster finished fourth at 126, senior Steve Costanzo was third at 134, sophomore Pat Kelley was fourth at 190 and heavyweight Wade Kroeze finished fourth.

Last season, UNO finished third at the national tournament, with 53 points. The Mavericks captured their only national wrestling championship in 1991.

Two wrestlers from Nebraska-Kearney advanced to the finals: Senior Martin Segovia lost 3-2 to Central Oklahoma's Mike Keim at 134, and junior Andy McNeff lost 5-3 to North Dakota State freshman Ryan Wolters at 190.

Bjorn Tomsen finished sixth at heavyweight to give the Antelopes their third All-America honoree.

Chadron State's Travis McDermott at 118 and Tony Dammen at 177 both finished fifth, earning All-America status.

Denney said he was especially pleased with the performance of his four seniors.

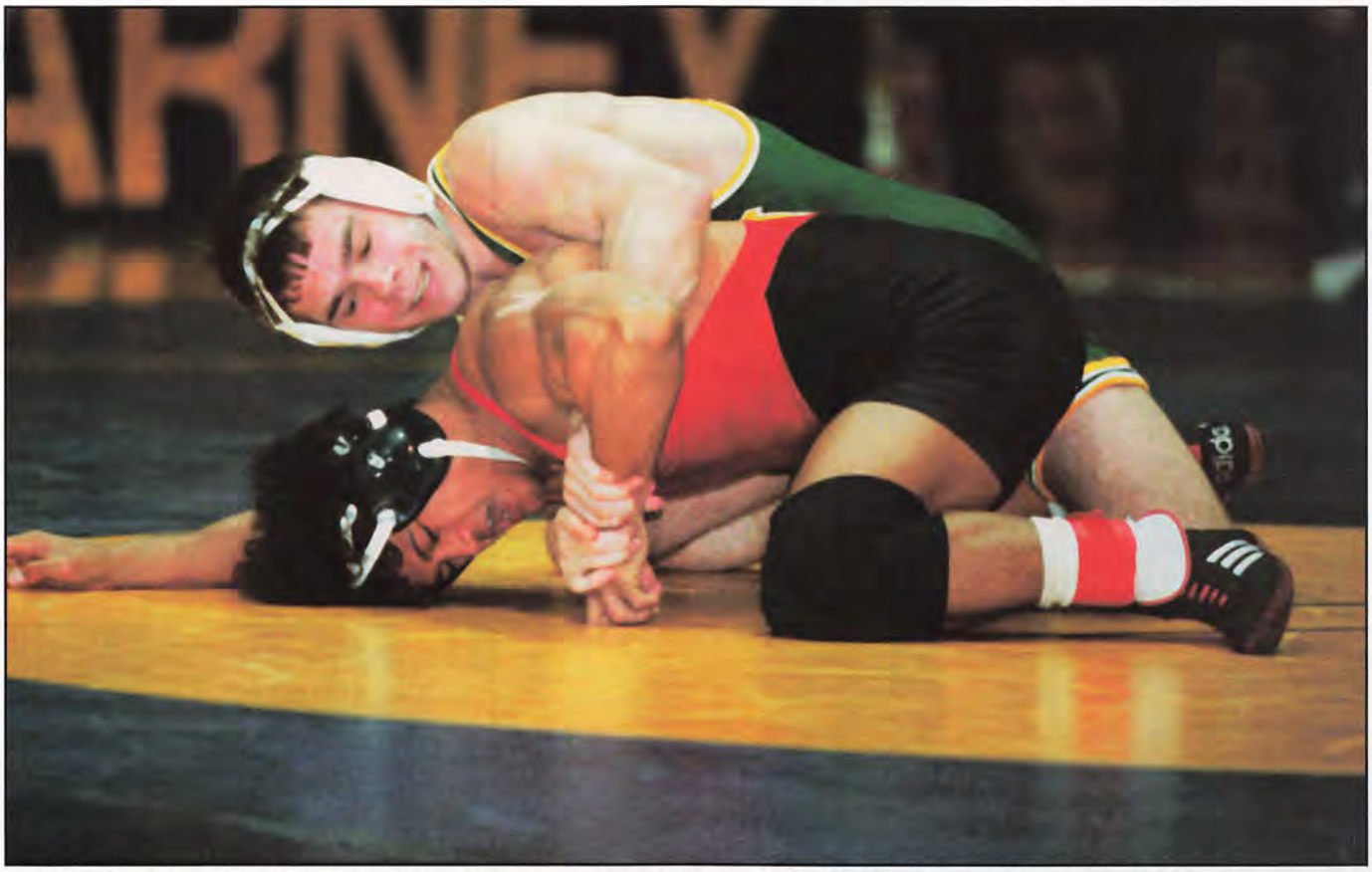
"They've been great leaders, really, ever since they got here," he said. "They've always been able to step up and keep things going when we needed them to, and they've been a real inspiration to the younger guys on our team."

Denney said the four seniors from this year's team will be missed next season.

"Obviously, we have some big holes to fill," he said. "We're losing not only a lot of good wrestling ability, but leadership as well. All four of them had more than 30 wins each (this season), and they were obviously the heart of our team."

But, he said, having six of 10 starters returning to the lineup next winter will relieve some of the pressure.

"This just gives someone else the opportunity to step up to the front of the class and take charge for us next year," Denney said. ■



UNO's Lim Prim had trouble with Brian Kapusta, who won his third consecutive title at 118.

APRIL

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDA
30 Missouri at NU – 11:00 am Bradley at CU, doubleheader – Noon NU at Kansas – 1:00 pm Buffalo at Omaha – 2:05 pm Missouri Valley Conference Championships, Wichita, KS – ALL DAY	NEBRAS SPORT Maga	
2 Illinois St. at CU – 9:00 am Northern Iowa at CU – 1:00 pm Oklahoma St. at NU – 1:00 pm Missouri-Kansas City at CU – 1:00 pm Missouri at NU – 2:00 pm Colorado at NU – TBA	**3**	**4** Kansas at NU – 1:00 pm
9 CU at Illinois St. – 8:30 am NU at Kansas – 11:00 am NU at Oklahoma St. – 1:00 pm Southern Illinois at CU – 1:00 pm NU at Oklahoma – 2:00 pm Iowa at Omaha – 2:05 pm CU at Wichita St. – 6:00 pm NU at Oklahoma – TBA	**10** NU at Missouri-Kansas City – 1:00 pm Louisville at Omaha – 7:05 pm	**11** Louisville at Omaha – 12:05 p NU at CU – 3:30 pm
16 CU at Indiana St. – Noon Kansas at NU – 2:00 pm Louisville at NU – 11:00 am Wyoming at NU after the first game NU at UNI-Dome Tournament Cedar Rapids, IA – ALL DAY Kansas at NU – TBA CU at Bradley – TBA	**17** Wyoming at NU – 1:30 pm Omaha at Oklahoma City – 6:35 pm Kansas St. at NU – TBA	**18** Omaha at Oklahoma City –
23 Iowa St. at NU – 11:00 am Iowa St. at NU – 1:00 pm CU at Evansville – 1:00 pm New Orleans at Omaha – 2:05 pm NU at Big Eight Championships Oklahoma City, OK – ALL DAY NU at Big Eight Championships Oklahoma City, OK – ALL DAY Missouri Valley Conference Championships Springfield, MO – ALL DAY	**24** New Orleans at Omaha – 7:05 pm CU at Evansville – 8:30 pm	**25** CU at Iowa St. – 2:00 pm Drake at NU – 2:00 pm Kansas St. at NU – 7:00 pm Nashville at Omaha – 7:05

1995

Y	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
K A S zine	Baseball Softball Track & Field Men's Gymnastics Women's Gymnastics Men's Tennis Women's Tennis Special Events			**1** Oklahoma St. at NU – 1:00 pm Northern Iowa at CU doubleheader – Noon Missouri at NU – 2:00 pm SW Missouri St. at CU – 2:00 pm Mountain Pacific Championships Albuquerque, NM – 7:00 pm Tar Heel Invitational Chapel Hill, NC – TBA
	5 Drake at CU – 2:00 pm Kansas at NU – 3:00 pm	**6** Iowa at Omaha – 7:05 pm	**7** Colorado at NU – 11:00 am Evansville at CU – 2:00 pm NU at Oklahoma St. – 7:00 pm Iowa at Omaha – 7:05 pm Southern Illinois at CU – TBA	**8** Colorado St./Minnesota/Wichita St. at NU – 10:30 am Southern Illinois at CU,doubleheader – Noon NU at Kansas – 1:00 pm Southern Illinois at CU – 1:00 pm CU vs. Evansville, Normal, Ill. – 1:30 pm NU at Oklahoma St. – 2:00 pm CU at Tulsa – 2:00 pm NCAA Midwest Regionals, Lincoln – 6:00 pm NU at Oklahoma St. – 7:00 pm Iowa at Omaha – 7:05 pm CU at Bradley, Normal, Ill. – 8:30 pm NCAA West Regional, Norman, OK – TBA NU at Oklahoma St. – TBA
m	**12** Drake at CU – 2:00 pm CU at Kansas – 3:00 pm CU at NU – 7:00 pm Indianapolis at Omaha – 7:05 pm	**13** Indianapolis at Omaha – 7:05 pm	**14** CU at Bradley – 3:00 pm Wyoming at CU – 3:30 pm Louisville at NU – 7:00 pm Omaha at Iowa – 7:15 pm NU at UNI-Dome Tournament Cedar Rapids, IA – ALL DAY	**15** UTEP Invitational El Paso, TX – 10:00 am CU at Illinois St. – Noon Wyoming at CU, doubleheader – Noon Missouri at NU – 2:00 pm Louisville at NU – 7:00 pm Omaha at Iowa – 7:15 pm NU at UNI-Dome Tournament Cedar Rapids, IA – ALL DAY Missouri at NU – TBA CU at Southern Illinois – TBA
6:35 pm	**19** NU at Iowa St. doubleheader – 12:30 pm CU at NU – 6:00 pm Omaha at Oklahoma City – 6:35 pm Minnesota at CU – TBA	**20** Omaha at Oklahoma City – 6:35 pm NCAA Championships Columbus, Ohio – TBA NCAA Championships Athens, GA – TBA	**21** Drake at CU – 3:00 pm CU at Evansville – 7:00 pm New Orleans at Omaha – 7:05 pm Iowa St. at NU – 8:00 pm NU at Big Eight Championships Oklahoma City, OK – ALL DAY NU at Big Eight Championships Oklahoma City, OK – ALL DAY Missouri Valley Conference Championships Springfield, MO – ALL DAY NCAA Championships, Columbus, Ohio – TBA NCAA Championships, Athens, GA – TBA	**22** Pepsi Invitational, Eugene, OR – Noon CU at Indiana St. – 1:00 pm Iowa St. at NU – 1:00 pm Northern Illinois at CU – 3:00 pm Iowa St. at NU – 3:00 pm CU at Evansville, doubleheader – 5:00 pm New Orleans at Omaha – 7:05 pm NU at Big Eight Championships Oklahoma City, OK – ALL DAY NU at Big Eight Championships, Oklahoma City, OK – ALL DAY Missouri Valley Conference Championships Springfield, MO – ALL DAY NCAA Championships, Columbus, Ohio – TBA NCAA Championships, Athens, GA – TBA NU Red-White Football Game, Memorial Stadium – 1:00 pm
pm	**26** Kansas St. at NU – 3:00 pm Kansas St. at CU – 4:00 pm Nashville at Omaha – 4:05 pm	**27** Wichita St. at NU – 6:00 pm Kansas City Royals at Omaha 6:05 pm	**28** Drake Relays Des Moines, IA – 8:00 am Wichita St. at CU – 6:00 pm NU at Kansas – 7:00 pm Nashville at Omaha – 7:05 pm Missouri Valley Conference Championships, Wichita, KS – ALL DAY	**29** Drake Relays Des Moines, IA – 8:00 am Missouri at NU – 1:00 pm NU at Kansas – 2:00 pm Bradley at CU, doubleheader – Noon Buffalo at Omaha – 7:05 pm Missouri Valley Conference Championships, Wichita, KS – ALL DAY

TOO STEADY TO FALL

Juggling athletics & academics, Nebraska's

SHELLY BARTLETT

still keeps her life in balance.

BY NICK SCHINKER

PHOTOS BY ERIC FRANCIS

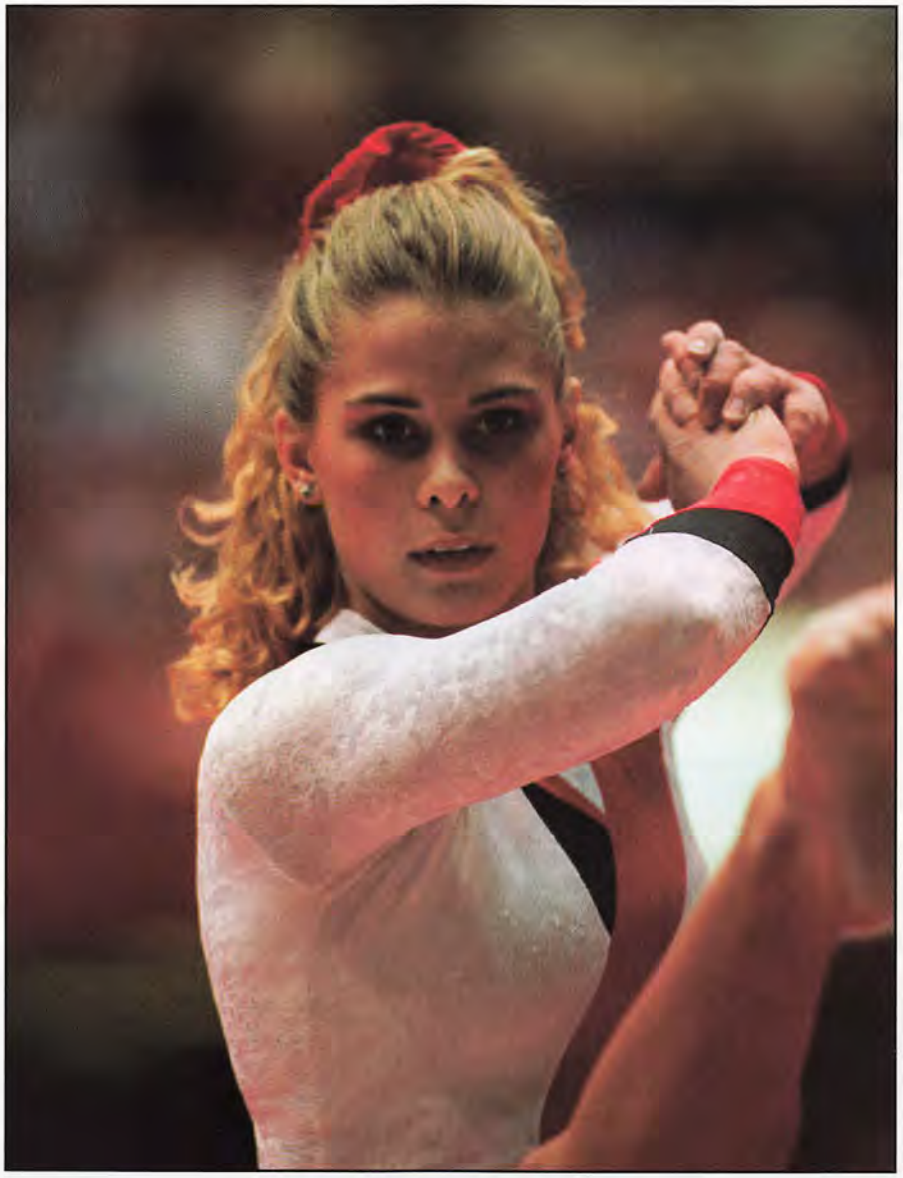
When it comes to balance, Cornhusker gymnast Shelly Bartlett doesn't reserve it all for the beam on which she performs.

She also injects it into her life.

Bartlett, a 19-year-old sophomore who captured the Big Eight balance beam title as a freshman, has been as consistent in her pursuit of a college degree as she has in her quest for a college gymnastics championship.

But consistency is just one of her qualities, said Nebraska Coach Dan Kendig.

"Talent and experience — she has all that, too," he said. "But what sets her apart is her enthusiasm and her desire to excel. She is willing to attempt anything I ask her to do."



A native of Missoula, Mont., Bartlett's interest in gymnastics was sparked by her two sisters, Mareen and Anne, and by frequent trips to their dance classes while Shelly was young.

"I used to go with them all the time and watch," she recalled. "They taught me a few dance moves, and I began working out when I was 6 1/2 or 7 years old. I started competing in fourth grade, and joined a gymnastics club when my family moved to Washington. I loved it.

"I guess it's because I've always had great instructors."

From the Northwest Gymnastics Academy in Spokane, Wash., Bartlett competed in five Junior Olympics. In the 1993 Junior Olympic Nationals, she earned 10th place in the floor exercise and finished tied for 13th on the vault.

Her sights then were set higher, not just on being No. 1, but on earning a scholarship in gymnastics to a Division I university.

"I always thought I could do better in college if I could get a good one interested in me," she said.

To accomplish that task, she turned to the electronic media — video — and began sending videotapes of her performances and practices to the Husker coaching staff. She checked with the Husker office regularly to see what kind of moves the women's team was practicing. Then she'd practice the same moves, perfect them, record them on videotape and ship off another tape.

"I sent a lot of videos," she recalled. "I figured if they kept seeing my work and my name, then they wouldn't forget me."

Her hard work paid off. She was invited to visit the campus and instantly "fell in love" with the school and the city of Lincoln.

"I thought I fit in well with the team right from the start," Bartlett recalled. "Everyone was supportive of one another; there was a lot of unity among the team members, and I really liked that. I also was impressed by the facilities."

She also liked what she saw of Lincoln.

"The city seemed very young and active and safe," she said. "I felt safe being here. That was important to me and my family."

What may have clinched her decision that first trip was a little activity on a Saturday afternoon in a place known as Memorial Stadium.

"I went to my first Nebraska football game," she said. "I love football and have for a long time, but that game was incredible. I'd never seen or been a part of anything like that before."

With her decision made, Nebraska gained one fine young gymnast, Kendig said.

"She showed the desire to come here early on," said Kendig, now in his second year at Nebraska. "She worked hard on the right kind of skills, and when she got the oppor-

tunity, she showed us she was willing to work even harder."

She proved her worth last season, becoming one of only three Husker women who competed in the all-around at every meet. During the season, her high marks included a 9.675 on the vault and a 9.75 on the floor exercise against Iowa State, which helped her to a 38.325 score in the all-around in that dual, and a 9.65 on the uneven bars against Illinois. She reserved her season best on the balance beam for the Big Eight Championships, where she registered a school-record 9.90 and earned her first All-Big Eight award.

The 1995 Nebraska women's gymnastics media guide shares her accomplishments, describing the 5-foot-4-inch Bartlett as "an 11-year veteran (who) exploded at the college level and established herself among the greats in Nebraska gymnastics history."

Not bad for her first season.

This year, she's become one of the Huskers' top all-arounders.

"She's doing everything that much better," Kendig said.

Bartlett said her strongest event this year has been the floor exercise.

"It kind of changes year by year," she said. "As an all-arounder, you have to keep on top of all of the events."

Her goal this season is to advance from the April 8 NCAA regional competition to the NCAA nationals April 20-22 at the University of Georgia in Athens, Ga.

She doesn't plan on making the trip alone.

"My biggest goal is to do whatever I can to get the team to nationals," she said. "We definitely have the potential to do it, but we have to stay focused and healthy. Individually, my goals are the same."

Her team spirit is something Kendig admires.

"She is very outgoing. That's one of her strengths, too," he said. "She is definitely a team leader. If she's not performing, she's right there, always cheering on the other girls."

Bartlett does have a few minor weaknesses, Kendig said.

"Sometimes, she maybe tries too hard," he said. "She doesn't let some of the problems she's having just roll off her back. She carries them with her. Sometimes her back hurts her, but she's actually rather durable. She doesn't really have any blatant weaknesses."

Kendig said Bartlett makes up for any weakness with her vibrant enthusiasm.

"I guess I'd have to describe her as vivacious," he said. "That's what makes her so much fun to watch. She really puts her personality and her character into all her performances. I really enjoy working with her in the gym. She listens and she's eager to improve. Those kinds of kids are so much fun to work with."

Kendig is quick to emphasize that Bartlett's eagerness and abilities are not rare qualities for his Husker gymnasts.

"She is a good performer on a team of good performers, and that's what makes the team so strong," he said. "We don't have just one star. That means we can walk into any meet anywhere and do well."

Her enthusiasm extends to her studies as well. Bartlett earned a 3.76 grade-point average in pre-education her freshman year, and was named a Phillips 66 Academic All-Big Eight, and to the Big Eight Academic Honor Roll.

"Her desire to succeed has carried over from the gym to the classroom," Kendig said. "Because of that, I think she'd succeed in whatever she decided to do."

It isn't easy balancing a 20-plus hour-a-week practice schedule and a full-time schedule of classes, but Bartlett doesn't complain.

"Actually, during the competition season, I think I do better on my studies because I know I only have so much time to get them done," she said. "If I had more time, I might be tempted to put things off."

> "The best thing about gymnastics is the discipline it instills in you. It forces you to manage your time. It forces you to stay concentrated. It forces you to work well with others." - Shelly Bartlett

Outside the gym, Bartlett enjoys water skiing, sand volleyball and country swing dancing, something she never would have been able to say before coming to Nebraska.

"I hated country music when I lived in Washington," she said. "Here, I love country swing dancing. I enjoy going out to the dance clubs."

The time she spends away from physical activity is reserved for mental workouts — her school work. Her goal is to become a history teacher at the university level.

"And maybe coach gymnastics, but at a different level," she said.

In the meantime, Bartlett continues to learn, from her classes and from her competition.

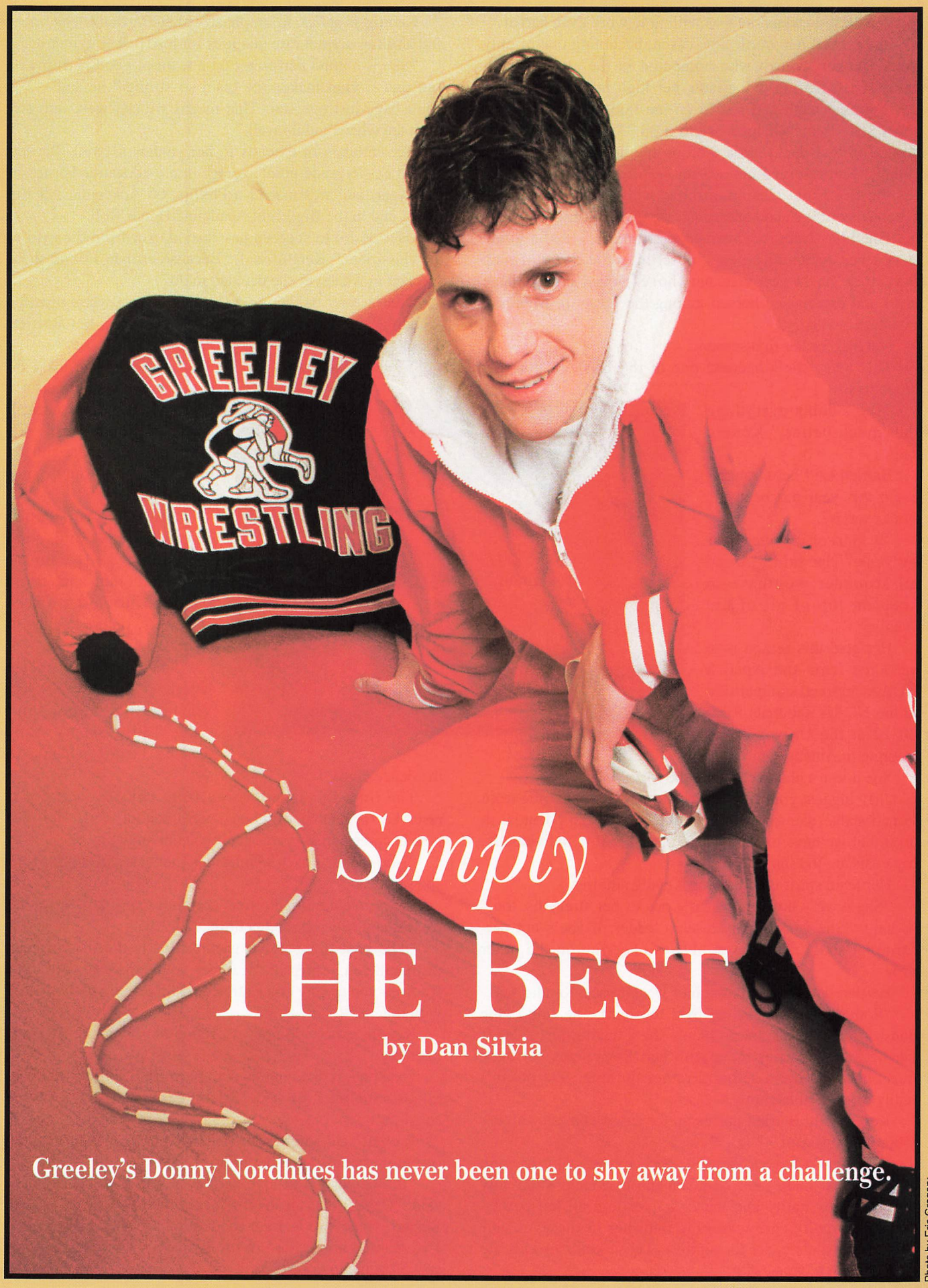
"The best thing about gymnastics is the discipline it instills in you," she said. "It forces you to manage your time. It forces you to stay concentrated. It forces you to work well with others."

Kendig expects Bartlett to refine her skills and build in intensity.

"As long as she continues to perform, I think she'll continue to improve," he said. "I don't think she'd be satisfied if she didn't."

Bartlett said she has learned a lot from gymnastics, but one thing stands out in her mind.

"It's taught me to love pain even if I don't like it," she said. "I guess that means it's taught me to be strong-willed. Because what I've learned about gymnastics is the same that I've learned about life. With hard work and dedication, it will all come to you." ■



Simply The Best

by Dan Silvia

Greeley's Donny Nordhues has never been one to shy away from a challenge.

Photo by Eric Gregory

Donny Nordhues has taken on all challengers.

First, there's the 125 Class D wrestling opponents he defeated during a four-year career at Greeley High School that ended with his fourth state title.

Then, there's cystic fibrosis, which sometimes affected his performance on the mat.

The disease didn't block Nordhues' efforts to place his name among Nebraska's high school wrestling elite.

Nordhues won his fourth state title Feb. 18 at the Bob Devaney Sports Center in Lincoln, pinning Arnold's Joe Bob Atkins in 4:26 in the 126-pound weight division.

"I did a duck-under and he was on his knees," Nordhues said of his winning move. "I went to a near-side cradle and put him on his back. I couldn't believe that I finally did it.

"A whole lot of pressure came off me."

Defeating 125 opponents is quite an accomplishment in itself, but to do it with cystic fibrosis made the achievement even more amazing.

Cystic fibrosis is an inherited disease in which the glands, especially those of the pancreas, lungs and intestines, become clogged with a thick mucus. When Nordhues is wrestling, the condition can affect his breathing and lead to coughing attacks. It can sometimes causes his arms and legs to cramp.

But one thing it hasn't affected is winning.

Especially at the state tournament.

Nordhues became only the third wrestler to win four titles and the first since 1950 when Omaha Tech's Fred Brown won his fourth crown. Herb Reese of Omaha Central was the first to accomplish the feat with his fourth title coming in 1947.

"It didn't really hit me until the whole crowd started clapping," Nordhues said. "Then it really hit me."

Nordhues posted a 40-0 record this season tying the all-class record for most wins in a season.

While Nordhues prepares for the wrestling season in practice, he has a few daily routines he goes through to battle cystic fibrosis as well. His day begins at 6:15 a.m., when he takes two aerosol treatments from a nebulizer. He then does percussions - placing vibrators on his chest and back - to help loosen the mucus in his lungs.

"It's supposed to loosen all the phlegm up so it doesn't set in my lungs and I get pneumonia," Nordhues said. "It's actually kind of like a massage."

After school, Nordhues receives another aerosol treatment before wrestling practice, and another after practice, along with more percussions.

"It's a pretty full day," he said.

Nordhues began wrestling at age 4. His parents, John and Jackie, weren't sure how their son would handle the cardiovascular-intensive sport.

"It's a very demanding sport," John Nordhues said. "It's kind of a two-way street. By working that hard, it kind of cleans out his lungs. Just the fact that he can do it with that problem is unbelievable."

Brian Laux, Greeley's wrestling coach, agreed.

"He leads by example," Laux said of Nordhues. "He's a smart wrestler. He always sets the tone of the match right away. Nordhues is a hard-working individual. He wrestles year-round."

Dave Kelly, a youth coach in Greeley, helped spark Nordhues' interest in wrestling.

"(Kelly) would take anybody that was 4-years-old up to eighth grade," Nordhues said. "I was having success early, and that made me work that much harder to get to where I'm at now. As I was growing up, I always had a goal that I wanted to be a state champion."

Nordhues achieved his goal earlier than most expected with a title at 103 as a freshman in 1992.

"I thought that I could win it when I was a freshman," he said. "My coach then was Ed Ross and he worked us real, real hard and got our mind prepared for it. He got us convinced that we could win any match at any time.

"My goals just kept getting higher and higher."

Although his first title was special and his fourth tied a record – and capped his high school career – it's the third title Nordhues will remember the most.

It was the 1993-94 season. Just before it began, Nordhues was hospitalized for 10 days. He was hospitalized again just before district competition began.

"It was the one that probably means the most to me because of what I went through trying to stay healthy," he said. "It was pretty tough for them to keep me in (the hospital). If I had the chance, I think I would have run out. I got out on a Wednesday and I cut nine pounds

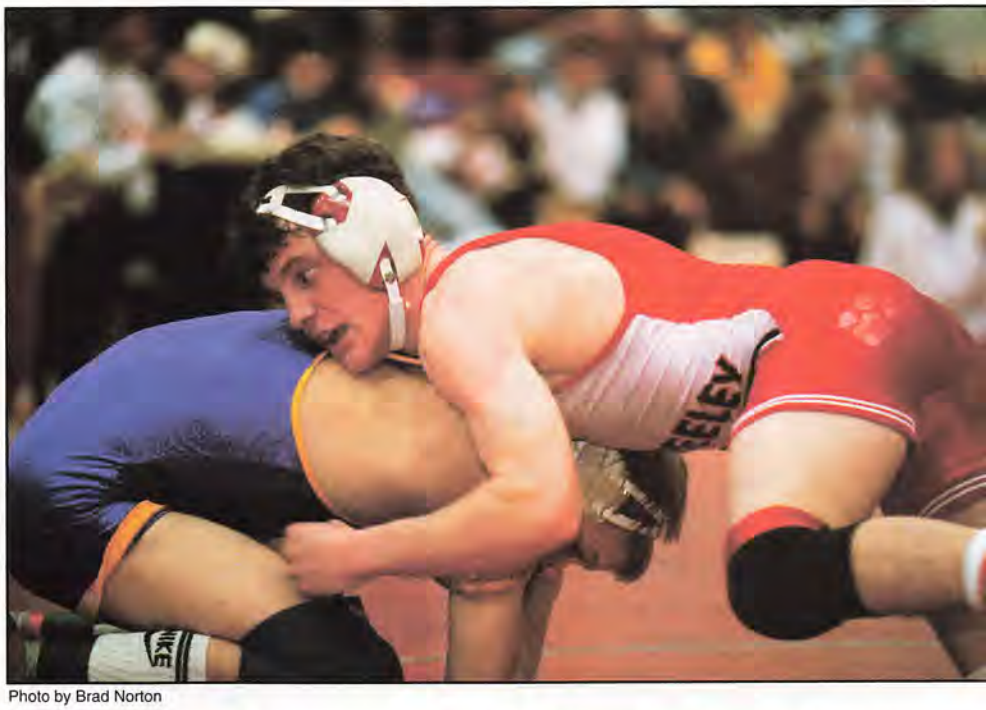


Photo by Brad Norton

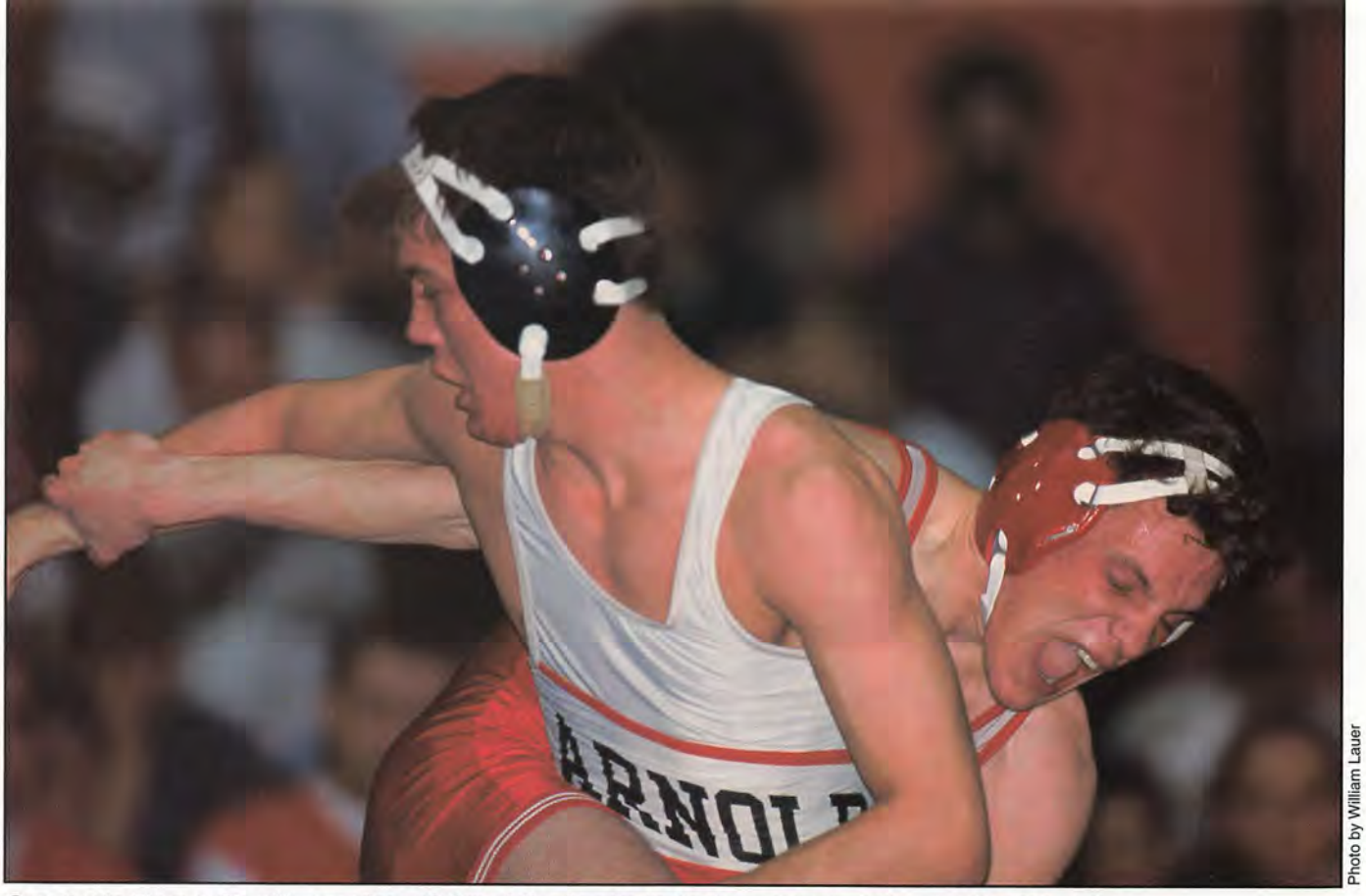


Photo by William Lauer

Greeley's Donny Nordhues pinned Arnold's Joe Bob Atkins at the state meet in Lincoln.

to wrestle at our home meet on Saturday.

"I was ready to go when I got out."

Nordhues lost to Tim Stevens of Red Cloud in the district finals, but came back to defeat Stevens in the state finals for his third championship.

"The first match, he's a good wrestler and everything, but I think I did take him a little light," Nordhues said. "My strong point is on my feet, and I didn't get in there and get a takedown like I should have. At state I went in and got the first takedown. After that I knew I could win the match."

His father said Nordhues had to rely on his wits a little more than usual in the 1994 state tournament.

"He really never had a chance to recoup," the elder Nordhues said. "Even by (state tournament time), he wasn't really in good shape. Two weeks afterwards, he really rebounded. It's hard to recover when you're working that hard. You just don't get a chance to heal. He really had to put it together mentally to get through that . . . he didn't have the stamina. He used a lot of mat savvy, just a lot of things you use to win.

"Of the three he's got, that was the really special one."

Nordhues managed to avoid the hospital this season. He works out every day with someone bigger and stronger: Kenny Nordhues, his cousin and Greeley's wrestler at 134.

Kenny quickly became the state's fourth four-time wrestling champion, when he won the title in the match right after Donny's.

"We've been wrestling each other since we were 4-year olds," Donny said. "It's good to have good kids in the room. That's what makes you better. If you practice all the time with a kid that is not as good as you, or not better than you, you tend to slack off and not work as hard. With somebody like Kenny in the room, you don't just get away with some lazy things.

"You have to work for everything."

Kenny, who has lost only one match in his career, credits his success to the competition with his cousin during practice.

"We always wrestle good competition," he said. "We're not used to wrestling slouches, so we're always ready."

Greeley also came away with the Class D state team title this season thanks in no small part to the Nordhues boys, Laux said.

Donny and Kenny have attracted the interest of college coaches, although neither has made a decision. Donny Nordhues is leaning toward Nebraska-Kearney, while Fort Hays State also is in contention.

He's still hoping the Cornhuskers might be interested.

"I've always been a Husker fan," he said. "I wouldn't mind going to the university."

Nordhues' athletic abilities never have been limited to the wrestling mat. He played safety for Greeley's football team, which posted a 9-0 record before falling to Brainard East Butler in the first round of the playoffs, and he runs relays for the track team.

"He's done so well," his father said. "He didn't want to use (cystic fibrosis) as an excuse. Win or lose, he did not want that to be the reason. If he loses, it's going to be because the other guy beat him."

Nordhues said he uses the disease as inspiration.

"I use it to drive myself to get better," he said. "It makes me work harder knowing that I have cystic fibrosis and knowing what my goal is." ■

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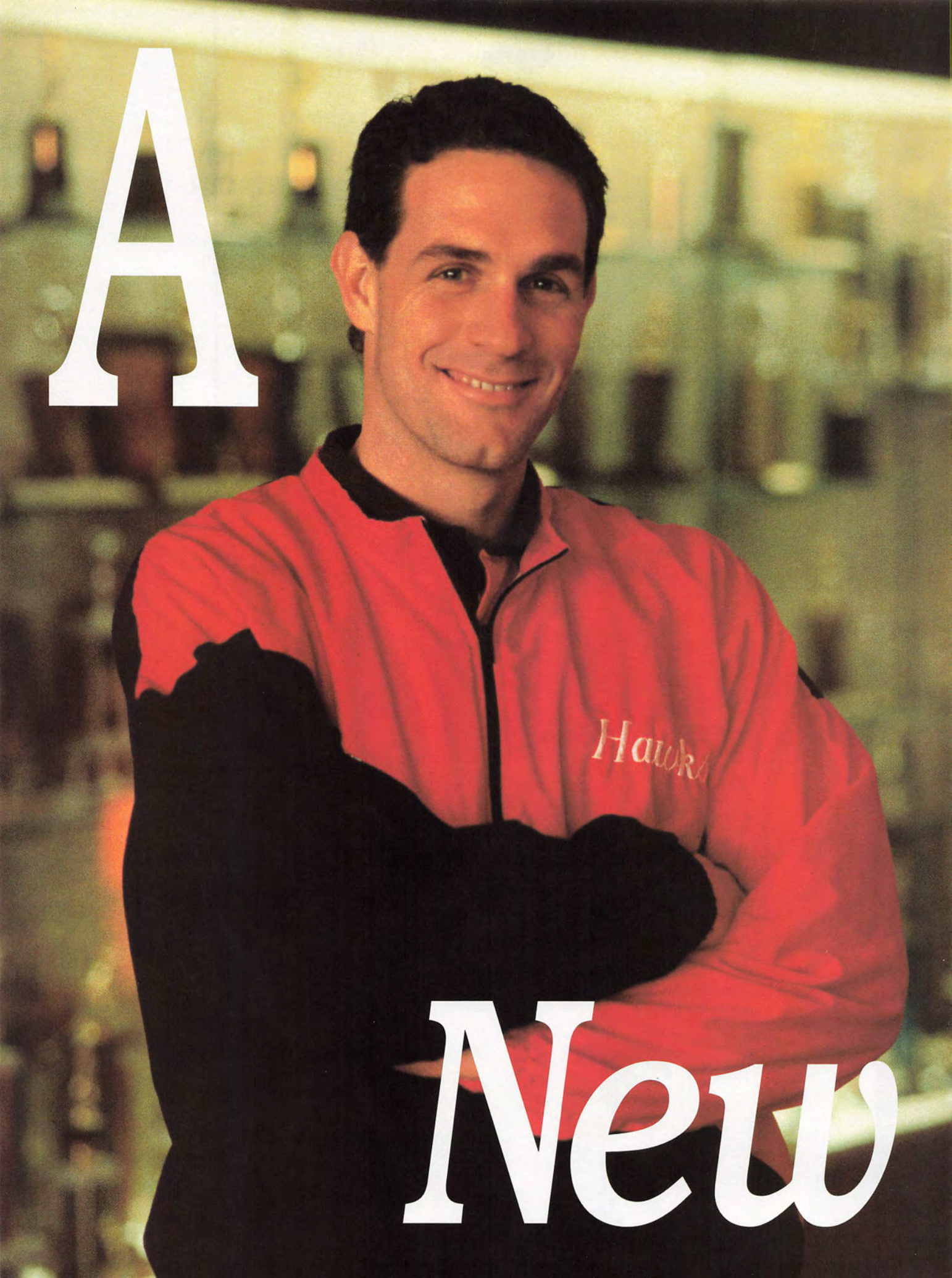

A
New

Matt Svehla rejuvenated the women's basketball program at Northeast Community College in Norfolk when he took over as coach last season.

Not only that, he did it gracefully.

Svehla, 29, inherited a team mired in a 2-7 tailspin with no love being lost between the players and the previous coach. To make matters worse, there were rumblings from players ready to quit the team.

By the end of the season, though, Svehla had guided the Hawks to an 11-14 record. This year, Northeast Community College finished the season with a 20-6 record and earned a trip to the National Junior College Athletic Association's Region IX Tournament in Caspar, Wyo.

Svehla's secret for success is his personality.

During a recent practice, he was playing defense in a shooting drill with his players. All of a sudden, Sarah Boyle, a 5-foot-5 guard, charged him and knocked him to the floor. Svehla scraped his finger in the process.

"I'm gonna get you back," Svehla said, grinning.

Boyle grinned back.

Sure enough, by the end of the practice, the pressure was on Boyle.

After the team had run several sprints, Svehla put Boyle at the free-throw line and informed her that the team would keep running until she sank two free-throws.

She made her first shot. But before the ball even began its descent on her second shot, Boyle took off for her next sprint, knowing the shot would miss — and that Svehla had won.

It's the lighthearted rapport Svehla has established with his players that serves as the cornerstone of the Hawks' success.

"He breathed the life back into us," Boyle said. "Playing ball seemed like a chore before. But when Coach Svehla took over, one of the first things he told us was that basketball is a game, and part of it is to have fun."

They responded to their new coach's theory by relaxing. And winning.

"This team is very coachable," Svehla said. "These players absorb more than most teams, and they respect what I tell them. I'm not a get-in-your-face type of coach. I may have to be someday, but not with this team."

A perfect day for Svehla centers on making people around him happy.

"Then I know I'm doing a good job," he said.

Apparently, he is. For now, most everyone associated with the Northeast Community College women's basketball program is happy.

"It's the encouragement he gives us on and off the court that's making the difference," Boyle said. "He cares about you as a person as well as a player, and we like seeing him happy by winning.

ATTITUDE

"He brings out the best in us."

While Svehla may be a big-brother figure to many of his players, he has had no trouble transforming into a serious coach by game time — or by practice time, if his players momentarily lose their focus.

Much of that stems from his playing days at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, where he was a walk-on guard for Coach Danny Nee from 1987 to 1989. It was in Lincoln where he learned to treat the game with more seriousness.

"Everything was more intense," Svehla said of his Cornhusker career. "A strong focus is placed upon you academically as well as athletically. I didn't mind it, because I knew it could only help in later life."

While growing up in Clarkson, Svehla met Jeff Walburn, the Clarkson High School football coach, and regards him as one of the most influential figures in his life. Svehla played football for Walburn from 1982 to 1984.

He said he admired Walburn's enthusiasm and positive attitude most.

"Even when the team was in a 22-game losing streak, Jeff always kept his confidence up," Svehla recalled. "He managed to find something positive in everything."

Written & Photographed by Barry Dahlkoetter

Svehla and Walburn have managed to keep in touch since, continuing the special bond they formed during Svehla's high school days.

While at Clarkson, Svehla would team up with Walburn after track practice and challenge teammates — or anyone else — to a game of two-on-two basketball. Sometimes, it was two-on-three.

The two were undefeated for two years.

"Matt was, and obviously still is, a great competitor," said Walburn, now the principal and athletic director at Davenport High School, and football coach at Bruning/Davenport. "We moved Matt from split end to quarterback during his senior year, and he passed for more than 1,000 yards. He then turned around and played safety on defense, and led the state in interceptions with nine.

"We had a lot of talented people that year, but it was Matt's leadership that brought everyone together."

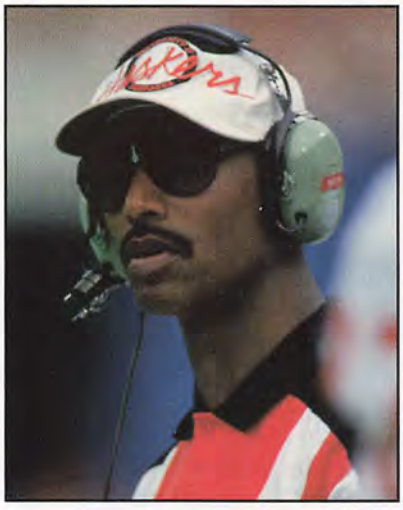
Walburn said even after Svehla left Clarkson, some of the success his teams enjoyed could be credited to the impact made by Svehla on the returning players.

"It doesn't surprise me at all that Matt is doing so well," Walburn said. "He has the kind of personality that kids are going to respect."

Fred Johnson, the men's basketball coach at Northeast — for whom Svehla played for two seasons and served as an assistant coach for four years — said he has learned patience from his former player and who's now his colleague.

"I have a tendency to look for the perfect game and

Championship Living



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expect my players to know everything immediately," Johnson said. "Matt has taught me to take a step back and allow them to develop. Matt has an excellent eye for recognizing good talent and getting the most out of his players.

"That's probably his greatest asset as a coach."

Svehla said he knew he wanted to be a coach early in college, when he was a broadcasting student at Northeast.

"I didn't want my association with athletics to be gone when my playing days were over," he said.

After Clarkson High School, Svehla attended classes at Northeast for one year, then transferred to Westmar College in LeMars, Iowa, for a year. He then returned to Northeast for one more year before attending Nebraska, where he earned his bachelor's degree in education. He has since completed a master's degree from Wayne State College.

Just as his many coaches have influenced him, Svehla has made an impact on his players.

"When you see how much Coach Svehla loves the game, it makes you want to play even harder," said Angela Folts, a 5-11 center at Northeast. "We were blown out by 20 points one night and instead of chewing us out, he was very supportive and told us he understood that things like that were going to happen."

"He teaches you to play smart basketball," said Carisa Bloomquist, a 5-9 forward. "Coach Svehla's very team-oriented because he never focuses on one player, or singles anyone out.

"He's changed the way Norfolk and the area looks at our program." ■

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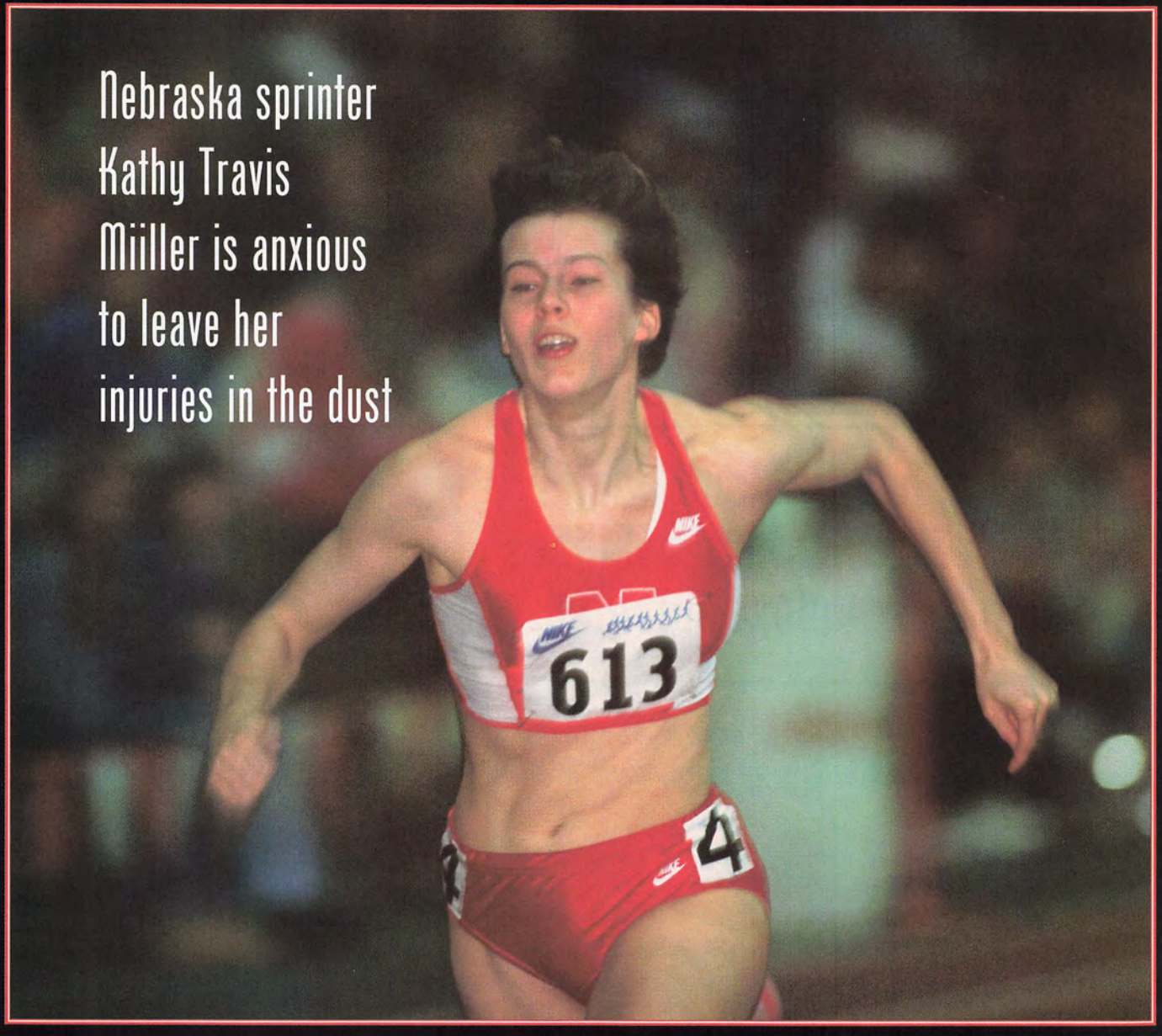

Nebraska sprinter Kathy Travis Miiller is anxious to leave her injuries in the dust

by Mark Derowitsch

Photos by William Lauer

Kathy Travis Miiller's best time in the 55-meter dash during this year's indoor track season was just .005 of a second slower than her fastest time last season.

But for a short sprinter, .005 of a second seems like an hour.

Travis Miiller, a junior, failed to qualify for the NCAA Indoor Track and Field Championships for the first time in her collegiate career. She had a good reason for her subpar season: Last fall, she had a bone grafted on her right foot to repair a stress fracture she suffered a year earlier.

So while the other Cornhusker sprinters were training and building a solid base, Travis Miiller — a three-time All-America athlete — was walking in a cast.

Slowly.

"It was a pretty frustrating time," she said. "The worst part was not knowing if the injury was healing properly."

The foot healed in time for Travis Miiller to compete during the indoor season, but it was obvious to her coaches and teammates — and her opponents — that she was not at full speed.

Her best time this season in the 55 was 7.01 seconds. Last year, she covered the same distance in 6.96, and she ran a personal-best time of 6.86 in the event twice as a freshman.

Steve Rainbolt, a Nebraska assistant track coach, insisted that Travis Miiller won't be out of form much longer.

"Kathy is literally months behind everybody else as far as training," Rainbolt said. "She knows her foot isn't going to get worse, but she needs to build up her base and gain some confidence again. She has to realize that it's going to come around.

"But it's going to take some time."

This season, she failed to place in the top three in either the 55 or 200 at the Frank Sevigne Husker Invitational.

"It was tough watching Kathy run last year," Kansas Coach Gary Schwartz said after the Sevigne meet. "She's a stud, but you can tell she isn't at top speed yet."

This year isn't the first that Travis Miiller has had to deal with injuries. She sat out the 1993 season as a redshirt after suffering the stress fracture in her right foot. She returned in 1994 to help Nebraska's 1,600-meter relay team earn All-America status with an eighth-place finish at the NCAA indoor championships

But last summer, doctors discovered another stress fracture in her right foot, and Travis Miiller was once again out of action.

"At the time, I didn't know when I'd be able to start working out again," she said. "When I got the cast off, the doctors told me to go by how it felt."

Throughout the indoor season, Travis Miiller looked uncomfortable navigating the tight turns on a 200-meter track. That was evident when she finished fifth in the 200 at the Big Eight indoor championships with a time of 24.97 — more than a second slower than her personal-best time of 23.87.

She also placed fourth in the 55 at the conference meet, helping the Husker women capture their 16th consecutive indoor title and 31st overall conference championship (indoor and outdoor).

Although she's not satisfied with her recovery, Travis Miiller said she already could feel herself getting stronger.

"The foot is still bothering me at times, but I'm starting to see progress," she said.

Kathy Travis Miiller looks forward to returning to her pre-injury form.

Nebraska's coaches relied heavily on Travis Miiller in the short sprints this season. The Lincoln Christian High School graduate was the only returning Husker in those events this season after spending two years in the shadows of Kwani Stewart and Shanelle Porter.

Stewart graduated last December after exhausting her eligibility in 1994. Porter, who also is recovering from a stress fracture, has one outdoor season of eligibility remaining.

Stewart won four Big Eight individual titles during the outdoor championships a year ago in the 55, long jump and legs on the 400 and 1,600 relay teams. Porter won the NCAA indoor 400 title in 1993 and finished sixth in the event at last year's national meet.

"It felt strange not running and working out with Kwani and Shanelle," Travis Miiller said. "We'd been together for so long, it's hard to imagine that I'm the oldest sprinter now.

"It's just something else I had to get used to."

Adjustment has been the focal point for Travis Miiller this year. Besides working her way back from the injury, her personal life has changed. Last

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From the staff of Nebraska Sports Magazine

"It was tough watching Kathy run last year. She's a stud, but you can tell she isn't at top speed yet."
- Kansas Coach Gary Schwartz

summer, she married Husker distance runner Kevin Miiller, a senior from Rugby, N.D.

Miiller, who will compete during the outdoor season this year, is one of the top milers and steeplechase runners on Nebraska's team.

"I guess we're just a track family now," Travis Miiller said. "Kevin has helped me deal with this injury. He's always there when I need him."

Travis Miiller's career at Nebraska began on the fast track. She qualified for three events at the 1992 national meet: the 55 and 200 indoor, and the 100 outdoor. She also ran a leg on the Huskers' 1,600 relay team, which finished third at the NCAA outdoor championships.

That same year, she appeared on the international scene as well, placing fourth in the 200 and fifth in the 100 at the 1992 Athletic Congress National Junior Championships. She also was a member of the U.S. team that competed at the Canadian Junior Nationals and the Junior World Track and Field Championships.

"Right from the start, Kathy showed signs that she would be one of the top sprinters in the nation," Nebraska Coach Gary Pepin said. "She's had some health problems, but her talent and work ethic is such that it won't take her long to regain her form. It's tough to see a talented athlete battle an injury for as long as Kathy has, but she's starting to show signs of progress ."

Travis Miiller finished her high school career as the top female track athlete in Nebraska. When she left Class C Lincoln Christian, she had tied the state record in the 100 and was atop the state charts in the 200 and 400.

In fact, she never lost a race during her high school career. But finishing behind the leader was something she had to get used to when she joined the Huskers.

"It was hard at first," she said. "But one of the first lessons you learn is that you can't finish first every time."

Travis Miiller's goal for the outdoor season is to return to the NCAA championships. With a larger track and wide, sweeping turns, she is eager to head outside.

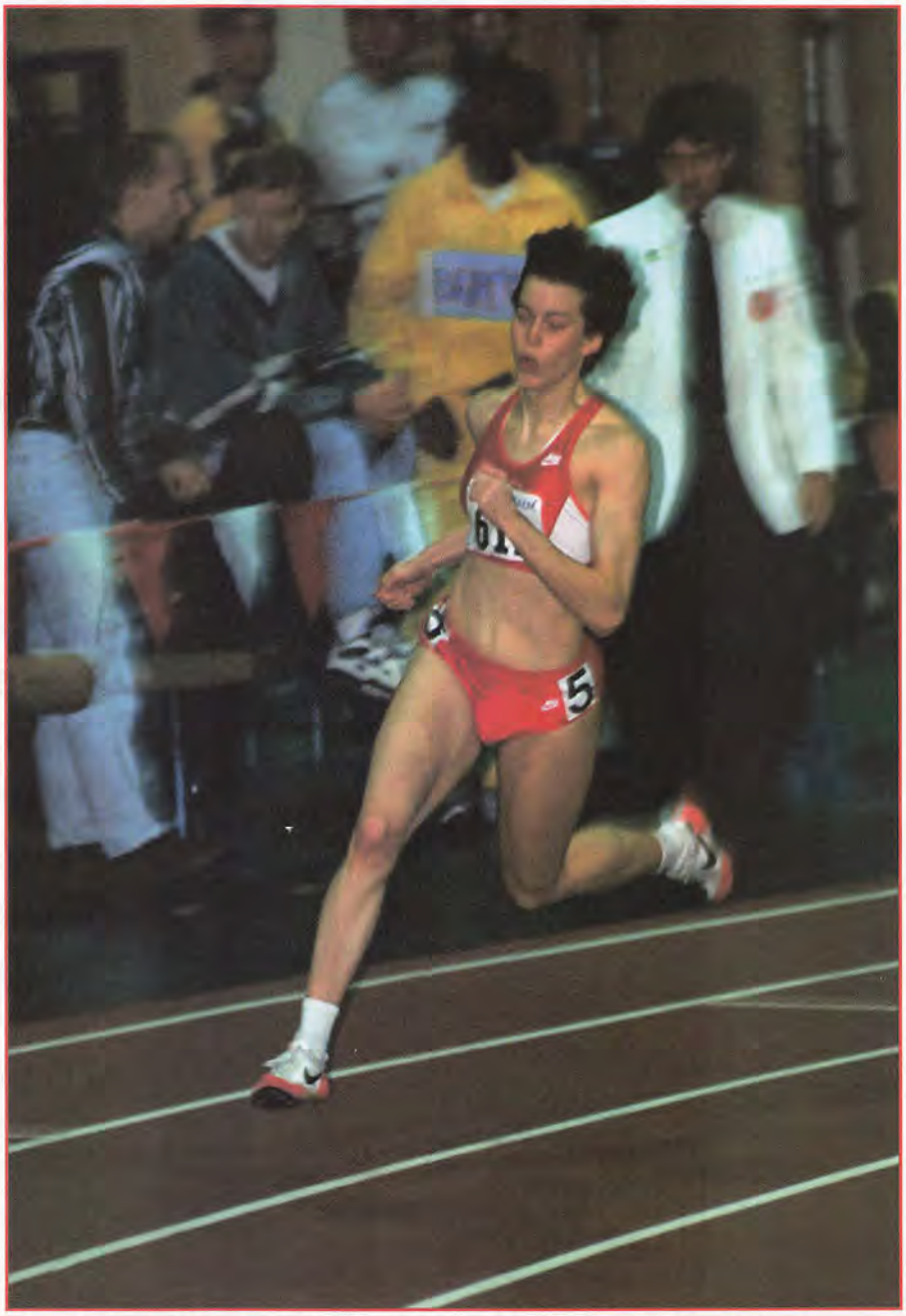
"I don't think I'll have as much of a problem outdoors," she said. "Hopefully, I can get caught up and run well again."

Travis Miiller also will have some help in the sprints from her teammates during the outdoor season. Porter rejoins the Huskers, giving Nebraska two-thirds of the talented trio that helped the Huskers win Big Eight titles in 1992 and 1994.

Also, freshman Annette Hall will strengthen the Huskers' short sprint roster. Hall placed second in the 55 during the conference indoor meet with a time of 6.96.

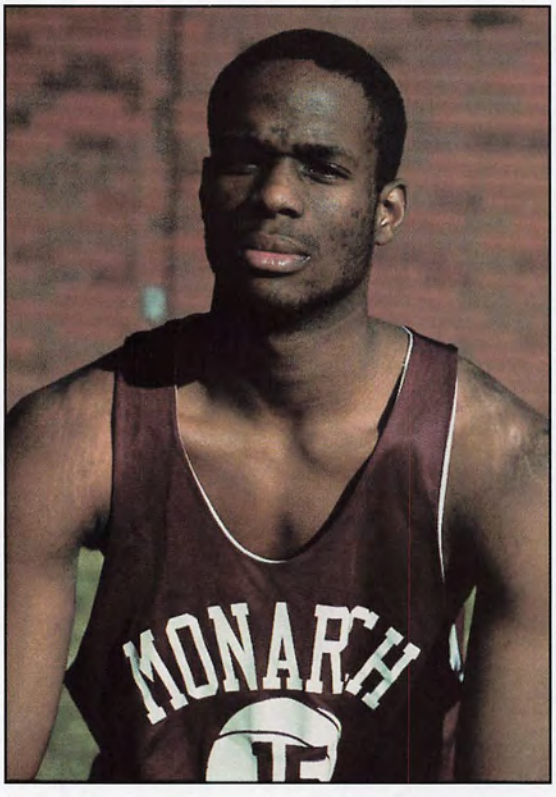
"We should be really strong again," Pepin said. "If Kathy and Shanelle are at full speed, or close to it, that will be a real strong area for us.

"Just like it has in the past." ■



Travis Miiller showed few signs of lost speed during the Frank Sevigne Invitational earlier this spring.

S·T·I·L·L GOING & GROWING



Papillion-LaVista basketball star Kevin Mungin has Creighton Coach Dana Altman thinking about the future

by Kevin Warneke

Just two minutes into the game, Kevin Mungin already was in his coach's doghouse.

After two missed shots, a turnover and some uninspired defense, Mungin was headed to the bench.

"You hustle!" Papillion-LaVista Coach Kevin Albers told his 6-foot-7 senior – loud enough for everyone within three-point range to hear.

"I was not happy with him," Albers admitted later.

After 100 seconds on the bench, Mungin showed his coach he had received the message, loud and clear: a basket from close range, a nice assist after taking a pass at the key and dishing off instead of driving into traffic, and a steal with a long dribble for a soft lay-up. Throw in two blocked shots on consecutive defensive stands and Mungin was playing the kind of basketball good enough to attract attention from Division I colleges.

On his first rejection, an Omaha Bryan opponent attempted a fake, but Mungin recovered quickly enough to block the shot while still off-balance.

Albers said Mungin has made great strides since his sophomore year, when he was the sixth man on Papillion-LaVista's state championship team. After a Monarch starter was knocked out of the tournament early with a concussion, Mungin stepped up his play to help fill the void.

"We knew when he was a sophomore that he had all kinds of physical talent," Albers said. "But he's only 17 years old. In many ways, he's still a puppy – physically and mentally."

As a sophomore, Albers recalled, Mungin was a 6-5 string bean. No longer, with his added height, weight and strength.

"He's becoming a man," his coach said.

As a full-time starter during his junior year, Mungin averaged about 18 points and nine rebounds per game. During the regular season this year, he averaged 15.9 points and 8.9 rebounds per game. The Monarchs finished the regular season with a 9-9 record.

Still, there's his mental game, which his coach said needs work. Mungin also must learn to stay focused throughout the game, Albers said, and to keep his intensity up.

Mungin lists his mental game as the area that needs the most attention - especially next year when he makes the transition from high school ball to the collegiate level. Instead of allowing himself to get emotionally pumped up before a game, Mungin tries to stay calm. When he does, he's realized, he stays better focused during games.

"When I'm jacked up, I tend to lose my focus," he said. "I'm trying to relax – and it's working."

Against Bryan, focused or not, Mungin finished with 25 points, 14 rebounds and seven blocked shots.

"He came back and got focused," Albers said. "He played a great second half."

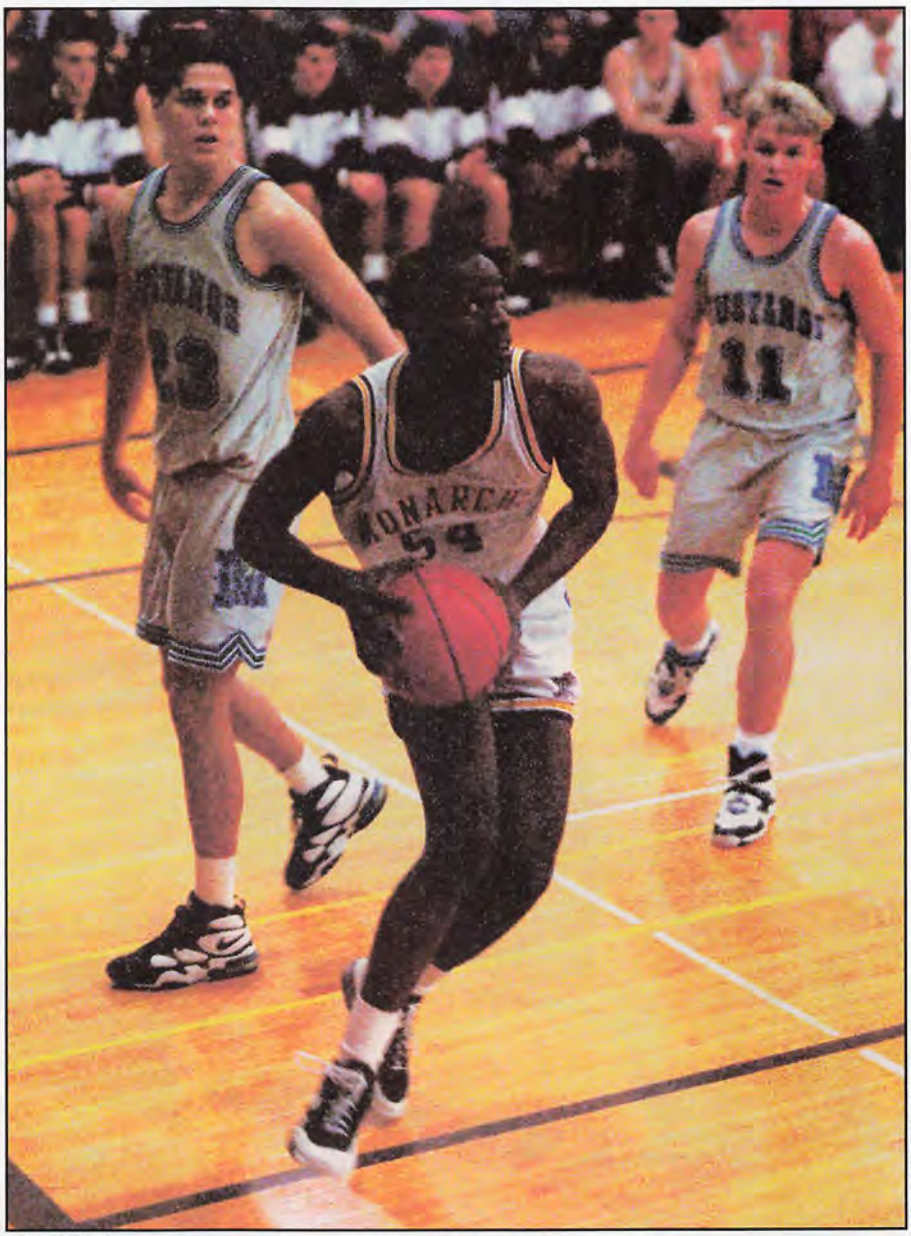
Mungin accepted a scholarship to play basketball for Creighton University before his senior high school season began. He chose the Bluejays' program over Wichita State and Appalachian State, which also offered scholarships.

He said he committed early to avoid distractions once the season began.

"I wanted to play ball and not worry about anything else," he said.

Creighton had an edge, Mungin said, because of its academic reputation - and because his family would be able to watch him play. He realizes the Bluejays have been experiencing hard times recently.

He'd like to help Creighton turn its program around – and he's confident first-year Bluejay Coach Dana Altman is the right person to lead the way.



Photos by Dennis Grundman

Kevin Mungin is a rare in-state catch for Creighton.

54
45
14

Mungin first met Altman last summer while he was playing on a Nebraska all-star squad that competed in a Las Vegas tournament. He knew of Altman's coaching success at Kansas State.

"I liked his style," Mungin said.

Mungin's decision to play college ball at Creighton marks a first for the university in more than a decade. The last Nebraska high school player to sign with Creighton, ironically, was another Papillion-LaVista standout: Ed Johansen.

Altman, in return, liked the way Mungin moved on the court, as well as his apparent athletic ability.

"He runs and he jumps and is very, very athletic," Altman said.

However, that's not to say Mungin's game doesn't need some work. Whether he redshirts his first season, Altman said, is up to Mungin and his family.

"He just needs to play a lot of basketball," he said.

Altman isn't about to pencil Mungin in as Creighton's pivot man for the future. Albers said Mungin's game is better suited to play the perimeter. That's why Joe Halac, although two inches shorter, plays pivot for Papillion-LaVista.

With a 6-5 pivot and an even taller power forward, opponents have problems matching up with the Monarchs. The Mungin-Halac tandem allowed them to battle Creighton Prep on even terms earlier this season at the Metro Conference Holiday Tournament. While Halac matched up with 6-8 Notre Dame football recruit Tim Ridder, Mungin guarded Kansas basketball recruit T.J. Pugh.

Mungin's two dunks in overtime allowed the Monarchs to build a 50-46 lead - one Papillion would relinquish in a 51-50 quarterfinal loss. Although the 6-9 Pugh outscored Mungin 33-17, he also took 11 more shots.

Altman envisions Mungin as a 6-8, 225-pound power forward with the ability to shoot from the outside. To reach that status, Mungin will have to add an inch and some weight. He'll also have to improve his outside shot.

"We'd like to have a power forward that size," Altman said.

This season, Mungin often finds himself with several opponents hanging onto his every move – something he has gotten used to.

In college, the bump and grind in the paint only will increase for Mungin. He realizes this and is preparing himself for that time. He's working to increase his strength, especially in his upper body. Already, he has increased his bench press from 170 pounds to 200.

But he's not satisfied.

"I realize I still need to get stronger," he said.

While his strength is a concern, Mungin has never had to worry about his height. He's always been taller than his classmates - even his parents.

"I don't know where it came from," he said. "My dad is only 6-foot. I've been taller than my mother since I can't even remember."

Mungin entered junior high school at an even 6 feet tall; he left ninth grade standing 6-3. Although his parents have average height, Mungin's brothers stand tall. Older brother Andre, who is 6-4, plays football for Midland Lutheran College; his younger brother, Christian, already is 5-9 at age 10.

Mungin's decision to play college ball at Creighton marks a first for the university in more than a decade. The last Nebraska high school player to sign with Creighton, ironically, was another Papillion-LaVista standout: Ed Johansen.

Recruiting Nebraska's best to play for Creighton is a priority, Altman said. However, he won't recruit a Nebraska athlete just to have in-state players on the squad.

"Sometimes, the timing's just wrong," he said.

The timing and the need, though, were right in Mungin's case.

"I hope it works out for Kevin and I hope it works out for Creighton," Altman said. ■

by Anthony Flott

FATHER *Knows Best*

AMY STEPHENS GIVES HER DAD AN ASSIST FOR HER PLAYING AND COACHING SUCCESS

AMY STEPHENS WILL never forget the marathon basketball sessions her father and brother held in the family driveway. To her, it seems as if it were only yesterday.

The high-pitched ping of basketball meeting concrete still rings in her ears. So does the thud of errant fade-away shots falling against the garage, and the crisp snap of the net rewarding a clean shot.

Above all else, however, she still can hear the fatherly advice of Richard Stephens preaching the basics to his son. Passing. Shooting. Dribbling.

"I remember very vividly standing with the ball under my arm just begging to get in there," Amy Stephens said.

Eventually, Richard Stephens noticed his daughter's interest and included her in the sessions. The driveways that served as their classroom, however, would always be changing.

Her father's career as a teacher and coach resulted in several moves for the family during these formative years. Richard, a native of Alliance, would shuttle his family to five different cities – including one in Virginia – before eventually returning to his hometown in 1981.

Basketball remained the constant. Through the years, Amy Stephens would absorb her father's knowledge. Though he never coached a team of hers, he made a lasting impression.

"From the time I was in the fifth grade, I knew I wanted to be a teacher and a coach," she said. "A lot of that has to do with my father. He really had a big impact on me. He was the one who was always in the gym with me, helping me with the fundamentals."

That little girl cradling the ball and aching to play is all grown up now. She still hangs out on the sidelines watching others play, but now it is as a first-year coach at the University of Nebraska-Kearney, where she runs the women's basketball program.

Stephens now passes on to others everything she ever learned in those driveways in Papillion, Lyons and Alliance.

Few other women have made a more indelible mark on Nebraska basketball than Stephens. Her talents blossomed at Alliance High School, where she attracted national recruiting attention during an all-state career. She finished her prep career in 1985 with a bang, setting the Nebraska high school record for points in a season with 779.

Photos by Brad Norton

Amy Stephens, a standout player at Nebraska, has played in Germany and coached two college teams- all before her 10-year high school reunion.

Stephens was even more impressive in college as a member of the Cornhusker women's team. As a four-year starter, she never averaged fewer than 12.6 points per game and tallied 1,976 points overall — good enough for third on Nebraska's career scoring chart. She still holds the Bob Devaney Sports Center's single-game record for points, blistering Oklahoma for 40 during her final season in 1989.

Graduation didn't end her playing days. With limited professional opportunities in the United States, Stephens headed to Germany, where she played for a club team in Wuppertal, a city of about 400,000 people.

"They weren't looking for guards over there, but primarily for post players. They think the bigger you, are the better you can play," she said. "But fortunately my team needed a point guard. Even though I was a shooting guard in college, we convinced them I could play the point."

The only problem was that she also had the U.S. National Team convinced. Just one week into her stay in Germany, Stephens was asked to return home and join the national squad. Selected as an alternate during tryouts earlier that summer, she replaced an injured player during a series of games in Canada.

"I was thinking at the time about possibly getting at shot at the Olympic team and I didn't want to jeopardize my chances," Stephens said. "So I flew back to Denver, trained for 10 days, went up to Canada to play four games in five days, then flew back to Germany."

The pace was even more intense overseas, where club teams prepare for the season with four or more "Friendship Games" each week.

"It was a bizarre month-and-a-half, but it was really exciting and exhilarating," Stephens said. "The adrenaline and excitement carried me through it. But after about a week-and-a-half, I crashed."

For Stephens, it was an exciting way to end her competitive playing days.

But Stephens had other dreams. The vocation her father chose was now calling out to her louder than ever.

Stephens hung up her sneakers and donned a coach's whistle. She returned to Lincoln to serve as a student assistant under Nebraska Coach Angela Beck. Next came a one-year assignment as an assistant coach at Omaha South High School for the 1991-92 season.

When Husker assistant Theresa Becker took over as coach of the Iowa State women's basketball team, Stephens followed her. She spent two seasons as a Cyclone assistant, helping turn around a program wallowing at the bottom of the Big Eight Conference.

Iowa State's program was in dismal shape when Becker and Stephens arrived, and things quickly worsened. The Cyclones began the season with 16 players, but ended with only seven (three of whom were walk-ons) and a 2-24 record.

"Even though at times it was really pretty hard," Stephens said, "it prepared me for anything I would face in coaching."

At the time, however, Stephens didn't know the experience would come in handy so soon.

Although she had been coaching just four years, Stephens felt confident enough in her abilities to apply for the Nebraska-Kearney job last July. The Division II Lady Lopers were looking for a new coach after veteran Joe Sanchez left to become the women's team coach at the U.S. Naval Academy.

While Stephens had few peers as a player, she still was building her resume as a coach. At only age 26, she was just five years removed from her career at Nebraska. Her 10-year high school reunion in Alliance is scheduled for this summer.

It was something officials at Nebraska-Kearney apparently realized. Stephens never was interviewed for the opening, and the job went to Charles Mancil, the former coach at Tyler (Texas) Junior

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College.

"I really felt I was a good fit for (Nebraska-Kearney) and I wanted to share that with the administration," said Stephens, who was one of 40 people to apply for the job. "But I also understood why I didn't get an interview. On paper, I'm not the best candidate. I have no master's degree, I had no head coaching experience. I understood where the administration came from."

However, her disappointment was only temporary. One day after receiving a newspaper clipping from her mother reporting Mancil's hiring, Stephens came home to a message on her answering machine to call Nebraska-Kearney Athletic Director Dick Beechner.

"I was floored," Stephens said. "I thought, 'What does he want?'"

He wanted an interview.

Mancil had declined the job offer, and the post was open again. The Lady Lopers, Beechner said, also had a change of heart. Rather than scan the coaching ranks for immediate help, athletic department officials opted to look further down the road. The new hire, they reasoned, could grow into the job.

Once Stephens secured an interview, she made the same impression she left on many an opposing guard in the Big Eight and overseas.

"She was persistent," Beechner recalled.

Being the second choice, however, hasn't entered her mind.

"(Coach) Roy Williams wasn't Kansas' first choice. (Duke Coach) Mike Krzyzewski wasn't either. You put that aside. I feel very lucky and very blessed that things have fallen right into place for me. I'm excited."

As the Lady Lopers' coach, Stephens now shares what she learned on the court with her players.

Stephens did not have time to worry about being second on the list. She was too busy putting together a team that, at first glance, bore a striking resemblance to the 1992 Iowa State team she helped rebuild.

The Lady Lopers began the season with just 10 players and eventually finished the 1994-95 campaign with only seven in uniform. That, Stephens said, is where the comparisons between Nebraska-Kearney and Iowa State end.

"The players here are really good people, good students and very good basketball players," she said. "The cupboard wasn't completely dry when I got here."

Although the Lopers finished the season with a 16-10 record, Beechner is looking for better things in the future.

"She's a good teacher as well as a good coach," he said of Stephens. "She has to do it all here . . . a lot of coaching, scheduling and recruiting. She is a very competitive person.

"We're happy she's here, and we hope she stays for a while."

Despite the success, Stephens has not been overwhelmed by her initial coaching experience. She sees no reason to be, because coaching is in her blood. Her father taught her well.

Now a superintendent of schools in Albion, Richard Stephens has managed to make the two-hour drive several times to watch his daughter leading the Lady Lopers.

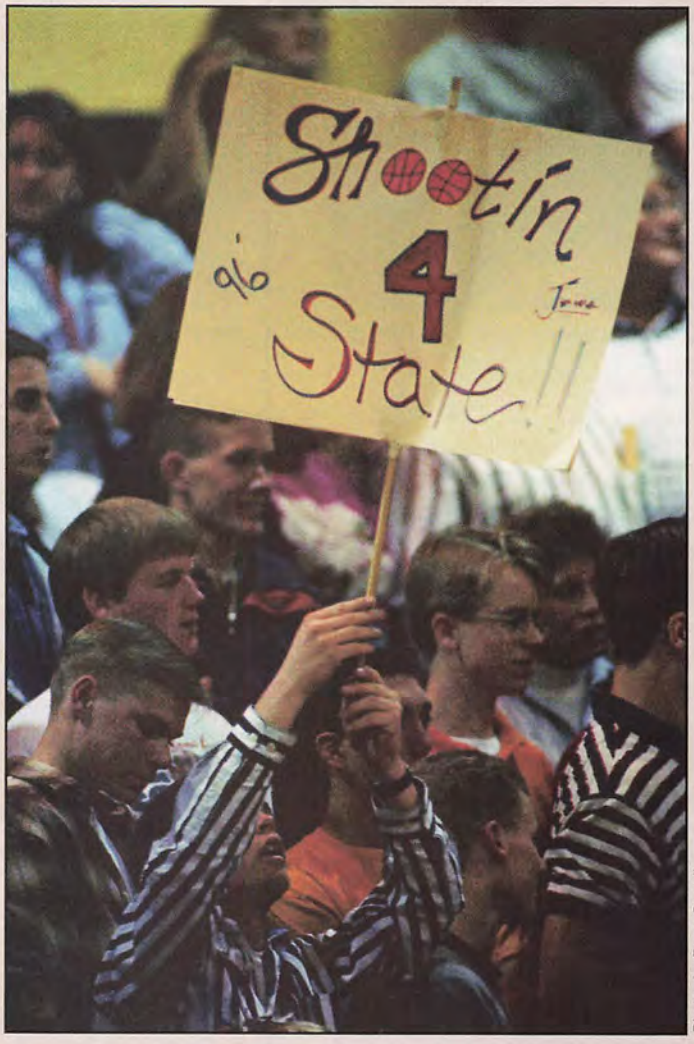
"He's been really positive and supportive," Stephens said of her father. "He still gives me tips every once in a while."

Just like he used to do with that little girl in the driveway. NSM

SPORTS ACTION
— for the Asking —

SPORTS FANS IN Hastings have too many dilemmas.

Nestled between the state capitol in Lincoln and the sandhills of western Nebraska, this south-central city of about 23,000 people stands in a rare position, not in its location nor as the site of the Lied I MAX Theatre, the state's only large-screen version of virtual reality.



Photos by Doug Carroll

Hastings stands apart from other cities of similar size with its three high schools, and an abundance of athletics to fit every taste.

For the more sophisticated sports fan, collegiate play is provided by Hastings College as it competes in Division II of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics. Its men's basketball team was ranked sixth nationally with a 24-5 record on Feb. 22, and reached as high as No. 2 in the polls earlier in the season.

But show time isn't limited to the college stage. Hastings' high schools garner plenty of attention on their own. While most communities its size has, at best, two senior high schools, Hastings has managed to keep three high schools — and its sports fans — thriving.

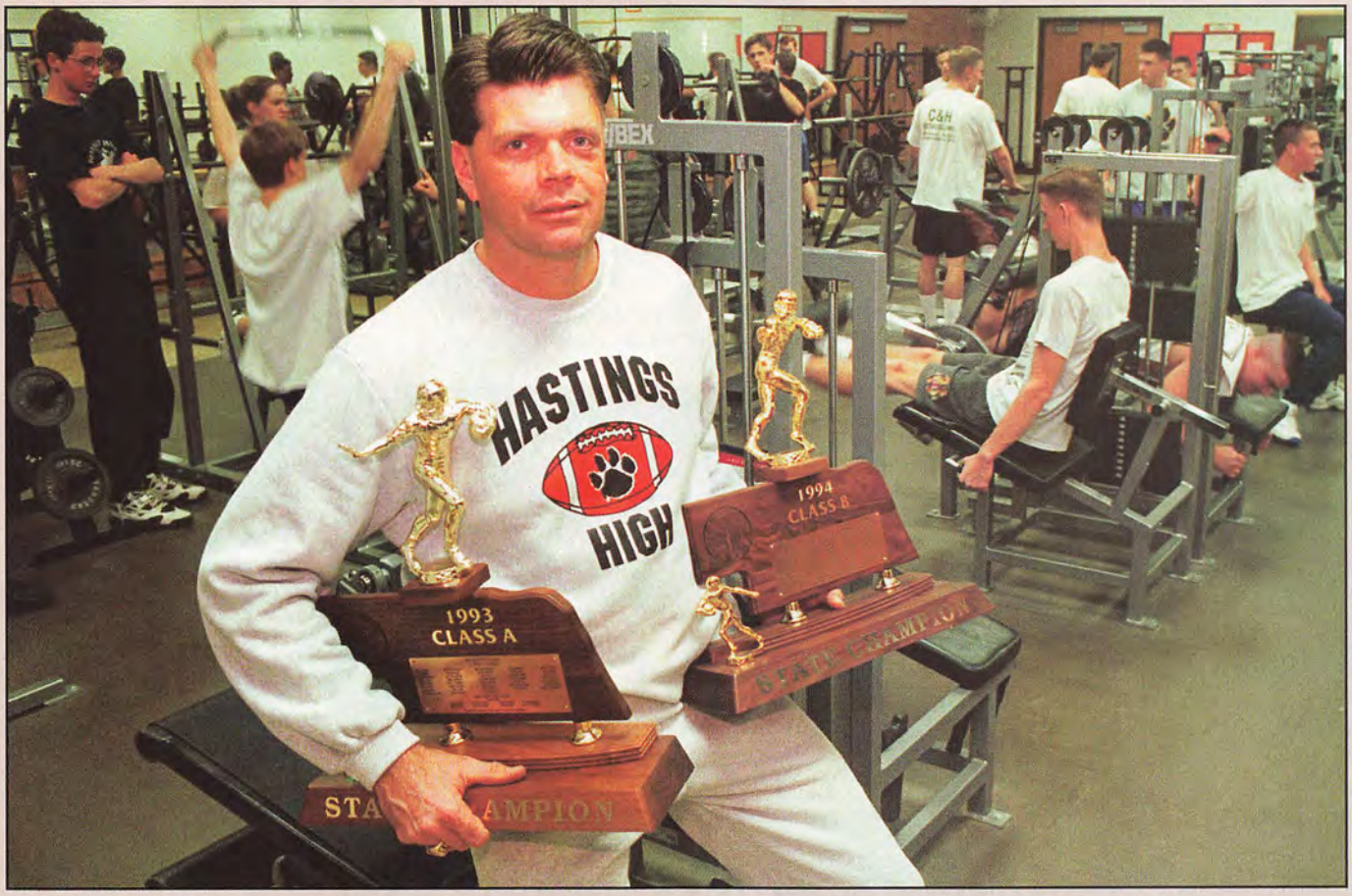
Hastings High School is the largest of the three with an enrollment of 945, based on grades 9 through 11. Hastings St. Cecelia, the city's parochial school, has 167 high school students while Adams Central lists 214.

Adams Central is a public school located outside of the city limits and primarily serves the community's rural area.

Enrollment figures have been a key aspect of high school athletics in Hastings, but possibly none more so than this year. A reclassification policy implemented by the Nebraska State Athletic Association at the beginning of the 1994-95 school year affected two of the town's three high schools. Only Hastings St. Cecelia remained in its previous classification. For Hastings High and Adams Central, however, the new policy sent the schools into new realms of competition.

Hastings High, for instance, long had been a member of Class A, comprised of the state's largest high schools. But with the reclassification policy, it has dropped down to Class B. Adams Central, a long-time Class B participant, joined Hastings St. Cecelia as a member of Class C-1.

The change has not been favorably met particularly by the Hastings High athletic administration. Hastings activities director Bob Moderow said school offi-



Walt Olsen, Hastings High School football coach, is hoping the recently renovated weight room will help continue the Tigers' gridiron success.

cials favored reclassification only for football despite finishing 12-0 and with the Class A state championship in 1993. This year, the Tigers repeated their state championship performance with a 10-2 record — this time in Class B. Both Tiger losses came against Class A opponents Kearney and eventual state champion Norfolk.

Nonetheless, the back-to-back titles provided the school with only its third winning football season in the previous 28.

Despite the reclassification and the ensuing success in football, Moderow said the administration's heart belongs to Class A.

"Our coaching staff and myself are opposed to reclassification," he said. "We would rather be in Class A. That's where our friends are at. We're keeping our schedules as they are."

Dave Glass, treasurer of the Hastings Tiger Booster Club, said the town's three-school configuration has kept the school from retaining its Class A status.

"It splits up the population," Glass said. "Hastings probably would be in Class A. But that's the way it is. Kids can choose to go to school wherever they like.

"Hastings would have been competitive this year, but year in, year out, that wouldn't have been the case. The last two years, we've had an exceptional bunch of kids."

The reclassification also has its upside for the Tigers. In boys' basketball, for instance, the school managed to attain a No. 2 ranking in the Omaha World-Herald's Class B poll, despite a 3-15 record at one point in the season.

"We're undefeated in Class B," Moderow said. "I think that shows how much ratings mean. People laugh it up about it."

In the Tigers' defense, however, every one of their Class A opponents have been ranked among the top 10 sometime during this basketball season. And the lack of wins hasn't detracted from their drawing power at the gate.

"We still have that hard-core group that comes out," Moderow said. "The only game where we drew less than I anticipated was when we played Lincoln High."

Although Hastings High might have lost some of the prestige through its classification drop, the change has been taken in stride at Adams Central. The students who played together at Adams Central and St. Cecelia off the court now play against each other.

"It makes it (playing each other) a little bit better. When we play each other, our coach tells us it's for the pride of the town. He says, 'If your team wins, you have bragging rights.' It's a motivator."

– Adams Central senior Scott Waters

And they play well.

"It s not necessarily a bigger rivalry," said James

Landwehr, Adams Central's activities director. "It probably brought us closer together. It's a family, really, in that we each get great fan support. The kids know each other before the game starts. They're the best of friends."

Scott Waters, a senior at Adams Central, said students from the two schools often meet at the local Amigo's restaurant after the games to recap the day's play. In fact, the son of Steve Vertin, the Adams Central boys' basketball coach, plays for St. Cecelia.

"Actually, it's pretty fun," Waters said of the arrangement.

Behind the friendships, however, lies the competitive spirit. Even though students of Adams Central and St. Cecelia meet together off the playing surface, players from the two schools attend to business once the whistle blows.

"It makes it (playing each other) a little bit better," Waters said. "When we play each other, our coach tells us it's for the pride of the town. He says, 'If your team wins, you have bragging rights.'

"It's a motivator."

Before this season, Adams Central and St. Cecelia seldom competed against each other. They still don't in football or track. But basketball has become a different story.

In a girls' basketball game Feb. 7, an Adams Central player hit a last-second shot for the 50-49 win. Nine days later and with district advancement at stake, Adams Central repeated, beating St. Cecelia, 42-36. The victory helped put Adams Central in the district finals against St. Paul.

"In district play, they all come out of the cracks," said Jim Nemitz, St. Cecelia activities director. "Attendance was probably 400 to 500 at the girls' district game."

Unlike the two public schools, St. Cecelia does not rely on school board approval for its athletic budget. Nor does gate attendance affect the school's budget. Instead, St. Cecelia operates through a special athletic committee that generates between as much as $100,000 per year for athletics.

"We don't have to base our athletics on our gates," Nemitz said. "There are so many other activities these days. People are two busy, or they're couch potatoes. For myself, in the last three months, I've been home five nights a week."

Still, the town of Hastings undoubtedly loves its athletics as evident through the schools' facilities. For instance, St. Cecelia gymnasium holds a college-regulation court and seats 1,500 people. It was built in 1988. Hastings High, meanwhile, built its gymnasium three years ago. With 10 baskets and a seating capacity of 3,100, Nemitz said, it's "one of the top five gyms in the state."

The true test of the community's athletic pride came during the 1993 football season. All three schools made the playoffs that year with Hastings High capturing the Class A title and Adams Central finishing runner-up in Class B.

"It was just a great atmosphere to be around," Landwehr said. "It was just a great atmosphere in the fact that everybody was rooting for everybody else."

Glass agreed.

"It was quite a deal," he recalled.

As treasurer of the 125-member Tigers Booster Club, Glass and other members have contributed to the school's success in a different manner. Through advertising in the athletic program and through receipts from the concession stands, the booster club has been able to purchase little extras for scholastic departments as well as the athletic programs.

The group's major coup came three years ago when it raised $20,000 to furnish the school's weight room. This year, the booster club put in a $10,000 underground sprinkler system for the high school's football field and practice field.

"The school boards don't have the extra money for things like that," Glass said. "The school boards wouldn't have forked over that kind of money for that to the same extent. No doubt the weight room and that kind of stuff helped (Hastings' success). But the kids did all the hard work. We can't take credit for that."

"We have very dedicated individuals," Moderow said. "Our kids work really hard. It is no fluke. We've had some top caliber athletes."

If there is any mystery behind the town of Hastings and its support for its high school teams, Landwehr may have the best answer.

"We try to put quality teams on the floor and they play their hardest," he said.

Case closed. NSM

Hastings St. Cecelia Activities Director Jim Nemotz.

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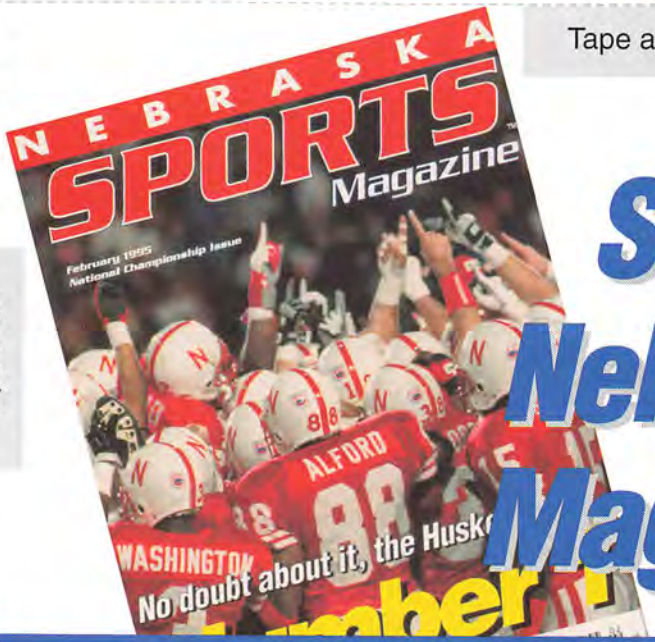

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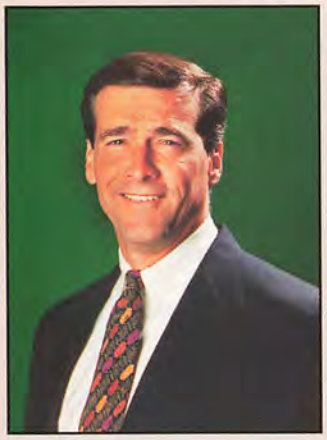


Even a Legend Needs Advice

IF MICHAEL JORDAN came and sat next to you, would you offer him advice?

Chances are, you'd sport that same blank, frozen look so many NBA defenders had after Jordan left them flat-footed with his lightening step to the basket. On the basketball court, Jordan did the schooling.

However, in this case, Jordan was the humble student asking advice from an Omahan who has graduate credentials in baseball experience.

Bob Herold's close encounter with one of the world's greatest athletes is just one entry in his scrapbook of dugout memories.

Herold's play at Cathedral High School was strong enough to merit a partial scholarship to Creighton in 1967. A coaching change at Creighton the next year prompted Herold to don the red leggings of Omaha University's team, where he eventually hit his way to All-America status.

His future seemed to lie in coaching, until his friend, Lupe Selinas, encouraged him to sharpen his spikes for a fling in the Mexican Baseball League. That's where Herold gained a five-year study of the game that now qualifies him to conduct class for Jordan and other aspiring big-leaguers.

Pitchers in the Mexican League throw with average Triple-A speed, but it's those other pitches — doctored with slippery elm or moistened with saliva — that send gringos home early. In fact, Herold was on a north-bound bus after only six weeks.

Most Americans don't return for another try. Herold did.

His hope was to become one of three "refuertos" — American reinforcement players — allowed on each team. The second time around, Herold mastered the breaking ball enough to finish an entire 130-game season. He also survived the second ruin of foreigners in the Mexican League: culture shock.

Instead of Wheaties for breakfast, Herold sat down to bananas, tortillas and beans. His teammates were glad to help with the language barrier, but the phrases they taught were usually filled with choice words that, even though innocently repeated, would cause Herold embarrassment.

So he found a better way to learn. His free time was spent with the kids on street corners who happily taught the refuerto Spanish while he, in return, taught them baseball.

Those kids were among the friendly fans. Herold also heard from the unfriendly ones at the Mexican ballparks, which ranged in size from 6,000 to 30,000. Regardless of the number of seats, the crowds' behavior kept Herold off stride.

For the first time in a baseball uniform, Herold had to dodge burning cigarettes thrown at him from the stands. An opposing fan in a raucous voice would bellow, "I'll bet you 500 pesos the gringo will strike out!"

Someone on the home side inevitably would step forward to accept the wager, giving everyone in the ballpark special interest in what should have been a routine at-bat.

The American would be a bum or a hero.

One time, Herold avoided a third strike by drilling a curve ball out of the park. During the celebratory high-fives, someone snatched the hat off his head and flung it into the stands. A moment later, while he was kicking rocks in the dugout, his cap was returned to him, full of pesos.

Those appreciative moments were balanced with some scary ones. Someone once threw a live scorpion on Herold's jersey during batting practice. It was his first day in Durango, and not knowing what that was crawling toward his chin, he ignored it. To the practical jokers, it must have played like a Clint Eastwood western – with Herold as the mysterious stranger calmed by nerves of steel.

Someone eventually brushed away the threat, and the truth was known: The scorpion had no stinger.

It's all part of the experience Herold cherishes. This understanding now serves Herold well as a manager of the Kansas City Royals rookie team in Florida, where more than half his squad every year are teenage Latin players.

So how does a much older Michael Jordan fit into this picture? For three years now, the top prospect from various major-league teams have been shipped to a winter league in Arizona.

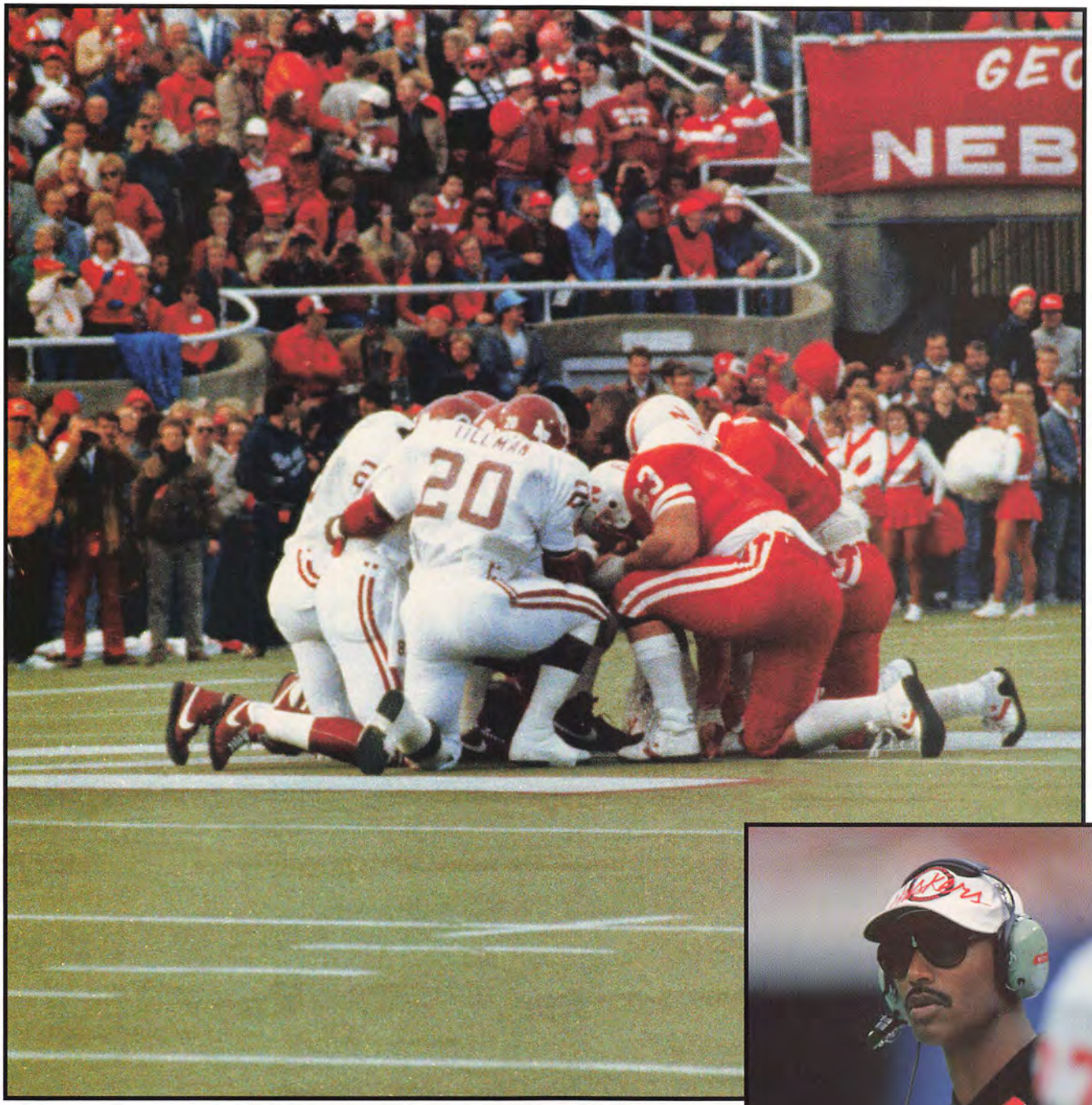
Jordan was the constant center of attention, and Herold kept his distance, not only to allow Jordan privacy, but out of respect to the three Chicago White Sox coaches there for Jordan's personalized batting instruction.

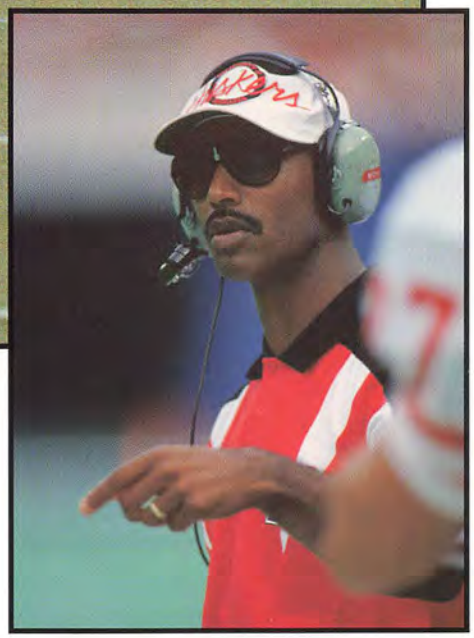
One day, as Herold watched from the dugout, Jordan eased alongside and, without eye contact, asked him for some batting tips. That led to a two-hour, post-game session several days later. It wasn't long before Jordan was driving the ball into the alleys for extra bases.

The next lesson, though, angered Jordan. Not only were opposing pitchers suddenly brushing him back from the plate, but some of those fast balls were finding their way to the NBA superstar's body.

When the camp ended, Jordan was grateful, but too busy rubbing a bruise to offer a handshake.

Maybe that helped him make his decision to leave the game. NSM





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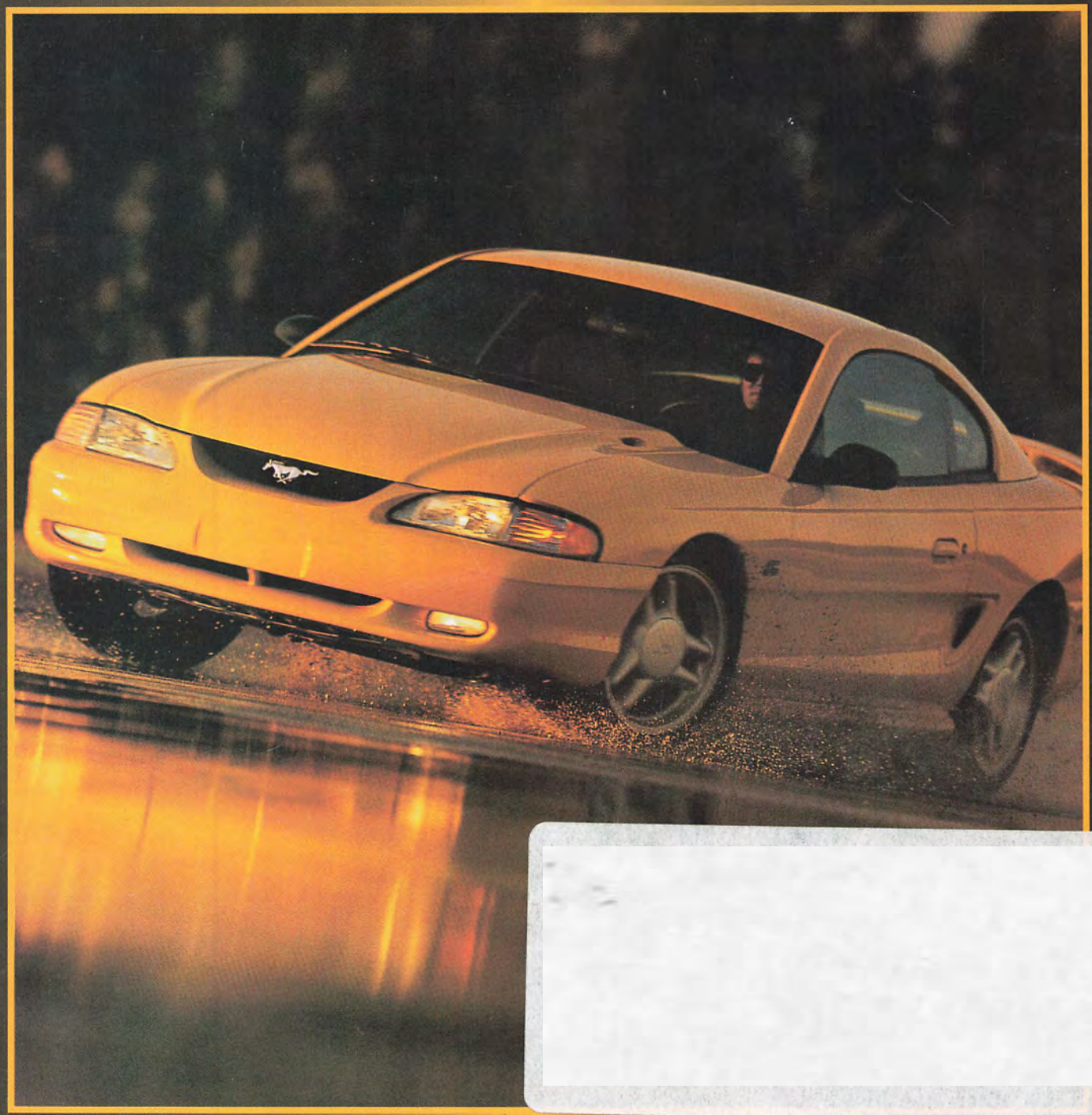

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